



Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting City of Sonoma General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report

Date: August 25, 2025

To: State Clearinghouse, Agencies, Organizations and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting for the Sonoma General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report

Lead Agency: City of Sonoma

Comment Period: **August 29, 2025 to September 29, 2025**

Scoping Meeting: **September 15, 2025, 5:30 PM**
Sonoma Community Center, Community Room 110
276 East Napa Street, Sonoma, CA 95476

The City of Sonoma (City) will serve as Lead Agency in the preparation of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City of Sonoma General Plan Update (Plan).

The purpose of this notice is (1) to serve as a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, (2) to advise and solicit comments and suggestions regarding the scope and content of the EIR to be prepared for the proposed project, and (3) to notice the public scoping meeting. The proposed project is a long-term General Plan consisting of policies that will guide future development activities and City actions. No specific development projects are proposed as part of the Plan. Information regarding the project description, project location, and topics to be addressed in the Draft EIR is provided below. Additional project information is available at the City of Sonoma, Community Development Department, located at No. 1 The Plaza Sonoma, CA 95476, and on-line at: sonomacity.generalplan.org

Notice of Preparation 30-Day Comment Period

The City, as Lead Agency, requests that responsible and trustee agencies, and the Office of Planning and Research, respond in a manner consistent with Section 15082(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.4, responsible agencies, trustee agencies and the Office of Planning and Research must submit any comments in response to this notice no later than 30 days after receipt. In accordance with the time limits established by CEQA, the NOP public review period will begin on August 29, 2025 and end on September 29, 2025.

In the event that the City does not receive a response from any Responsible or Trustee Agency by the end of the review period, the City may presume that the Responsible Agency or Trustee Agency has no response to make (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b)(2)). All Comments in response to this notice must be submitted in writing at the address below, or via email, by the close of the 30-day NOP review period, which is 5:00 PM on September 29, 2025:

Jennifer Gates Community Development Director
City of Sonoma
No. 1 The Plaza
Sonoma CA 95476
Email: JGates@sonomacity.org

Scoping Meeting

The City will hold a scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for agency representatives and the public to assist the City in determining the scope and content of the EIR.

The scoping meeting will be held on September 15, 2025, 5:30 PM at:

Sonoma Community Center
Community Room 110
276 East Napa Street
Sonoma, CA 95476

For questions regarding this notice, comments before or after the meeting or additional information, please contact: Jennifer Gates Community Development Director by email JGates@sonomacity.org or by Phone: [\(707\) 938-3681](tel:(707)938-3681)

Project Location and Setting

The City of Sonoma is located in Northern California in the North Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area within Sonoma County. Sonoma is a historic city located in the heart of the Sonoma Valley wine region.

Figure-1 depicts the regional location of Sonoma.

Project Description

The City of Sonoma is preparing a comprehensive update to its existing General Plan. The City of Sonoma's current General Plan was comprehensively updated and adopted in 2006 and encompasses a time frame from 2006 - 2020. Since 2006, the Housing Element has been updated regularly as required by state law, with the current version having been adopted in early 2023.

The City's General Plan includes a broad goal policy framework that guides land use and planning decisions within the city. The overall purpose of the General Plan is to create a policy framework that articulates a vision for the City's long-term physical form and development, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for residents and increasing opportunities for high-quality local job growth and housing options.

The City's General Plan includes the following elements: Land Use, Economic Development, Conservation and Open Space, Circulation, Safety, Utilities and Public Services, Noise, Historical/Archaeological Resources, and Implementation.

The updated General Plan will guide the City's development and conservation through land use objectives and policy guidance. The City will implement the Plan by requiring development, infrastructure improvements, and other projects to be consistent with its policies and by implementing the actions included in the Plan, including subsequent project-level environmental review, as required under CEQA.

State law requires the City to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of its planning area. The Plan must include land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety elements, as specified in Government Code Section 65302, to the extent that the issues identified by State law exist in the City's planning area.

The City of Sonoma General Plan includes a comprehensive set of goals, policies, and actions (implementation measures), as well as a revised Land Use Map (Figure 2).

- A **goal** is a description of the general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of the General Plan.
- A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making as the City works to achieve its goals. Once adopted, policies represent statements of City regulations. The General Plan's policies set out the standards that will be used by City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council in their review of land development projects, resource

protection activities, infrastructure improvements, and other City actions. Policies are on-going and don't necessarily require specific action on behalf of the City.

- An **action** is an implementation measure, procedure, technique, or specific program to be undertaken by the City to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy. The City must take additional steps to implement each action in the General Plan. An action is something that can and will be completed.

The Plan has been prepared to address the requirements of State law and the relevant items addressed in Government Code Section 65300 et seq. The General Plan is intended to reflect the desires and vision of residents, businesses, and City Council.

The following objectives are identified for the proposed update to the General Plan:

- Foster a sense of community that celebrates the area's history;
- Support local businesses and provide opportunities for economic growth;
- Provide a range of high-quality housing options;
- Protect the City's natural and cultural resources;
- Maintain strong fiscal sustainability and continue to provide efficient and adequate public services;
- Address new requirements of State law; and
- Address emerging transportation, housing, and employment trends.

General Plan Growth

While no specific development projects are proposed or would be approved as part of the General Plan Update, the General Plan will accommodate future growth in Sonoma including new businesses, expansion of existing businesses, and new residential uses. The Growth analysis assumes an approximately 25-year horizon, and 2050 is assumed to be the horizon year of the General Plan.

Table 1 below summarizes the range of growth, including residential units, jobs, and population that may be anticipated to occur under cumulative 2050 conditions.

As shown in Table 1, the General Plan by 2050 would be anticipated to result in up to 951 new dwelling units accommodating an additional 1,902 residents, and an additional 923 jobs.

TABLE 1: PLANNING AREA GROWTH PROJECTIONS - PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN LAND USE MAP

	<i>POPULATION</i>	<i>DWELLING UNITS</i>	<i>JOBS</i>	<i>JOBS PER HOUSING UNIT</i>
<i>EXISTING CONDITIONS</i>				
City	10,507	5,779	7,266	1.26
Planning Area	11,980	5,990	7,581	1.27
<i>NEW GROWTH</i>				
General Plan Update	1,902	951	923	0.97
<i>TOTAL GROWTH: EXISTING PLUS NEW GROWTH POTENTIAL</i>				
General Plan – Cumulative (2050)	13,882	6,941	8,504	1.23

SOURCES: SONOMA COUNTY ASSESSOR 2023; CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE 2025; U.S CENSUS ONTHEMAP; ESRI 2023, DE NOVO PLANNING GROUP 2025. SCTA MODEL AUGUST 2025 UPDATE.

Growth projections should not be considered a precise prediction for growth, as the actual amount of development that will occur throughout the planning horizon of the General Plan is based on many factors outside of the City’s control. Actual future development would depend on future real estate and labor market conditions, land availability, property owner preferences and decisions, site-specific constraints, and other factors. Additionally, it should be noted that historic growth rates have been much lower than the total growth that may be allowed under the General Plan.

From 2010 to 2023 Sonoma County experienced an overall loss of population. During this same period the City of Sonoma’s population has been stable, growing very slightly, at less than one percent between 2010 and 2023. As such, projections included in Table 1 would be expected to represent a conservative approach, and may overestimate actual growth over the planning horizon.

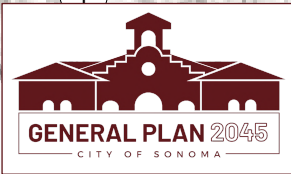
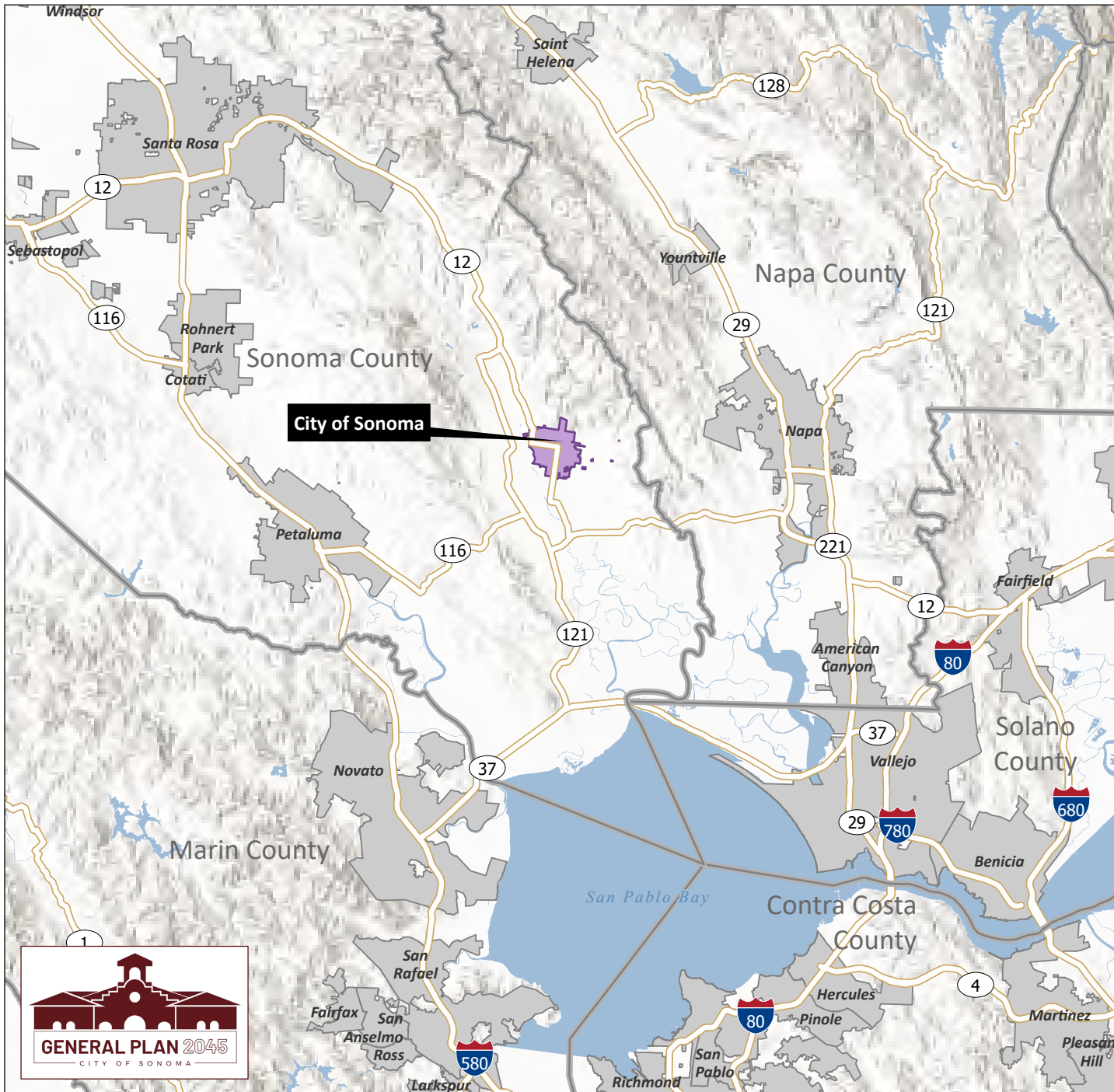
Program EIR Analysis

The City, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), will prepare a Program EIR for the Sonoma General Plan Update. The EIR will be prepared in accordance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines (Guidelines), relevant case law, and City procedures. No Initial Study will be prepared pursuant to Section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines.

The EIR will analyze potentially significant impacts associated with adoption and implementation of the General Plan. In particular, the EIR will focus on areas that have development potential. The EIR will evaluate the full range of environmental issues contemplated under CEQA and the CEQA Guideline. At this time, the City anticipates that EIR sections will be organized in the following topical areas:

- Aesthetic Resources
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change, and Energy
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Mandatory Findings of Significance/Cumulative Impacts
- Alternatives

Figure 1.
Regional Location
Map



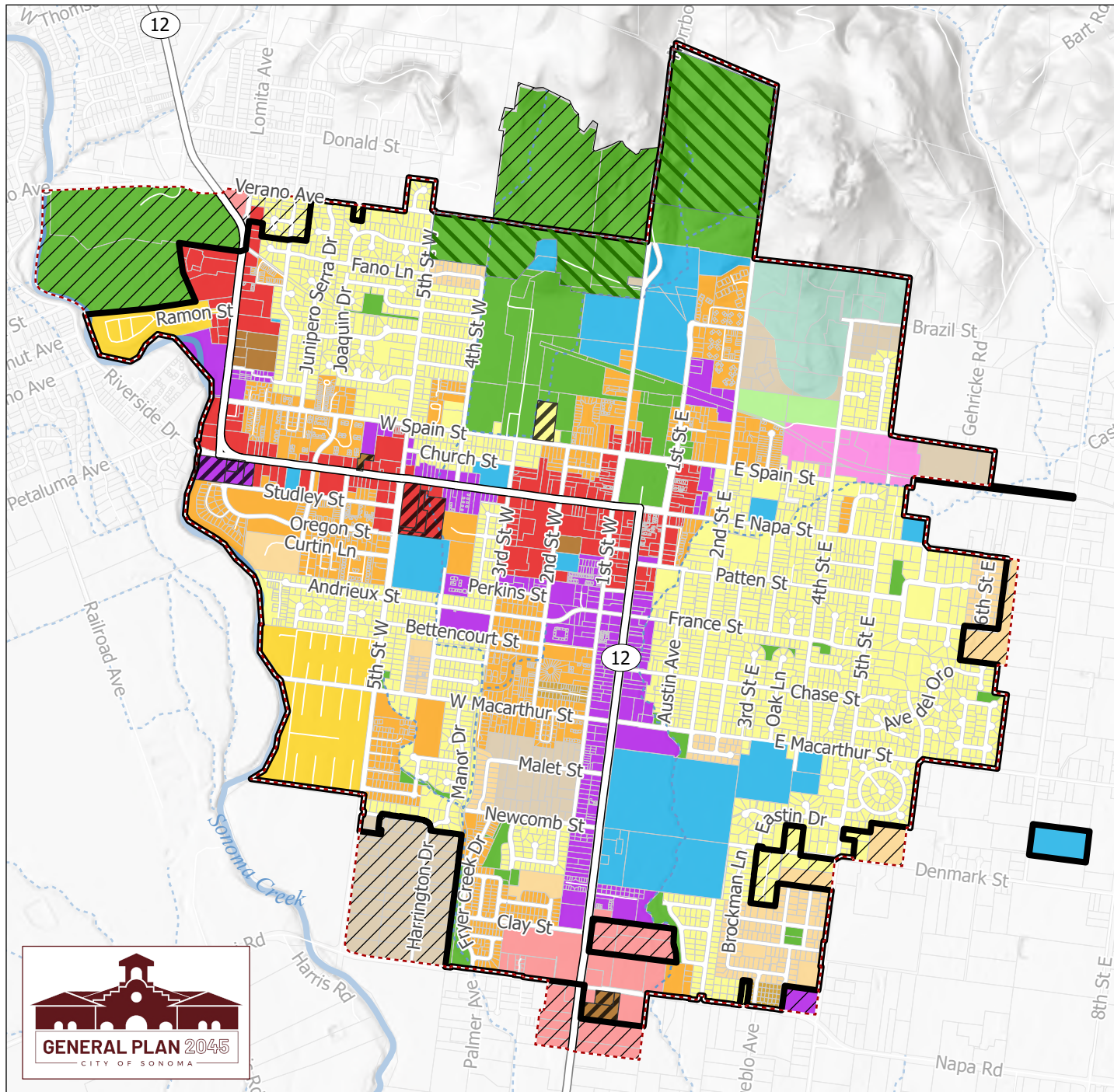
Sources: California State Geoportal;
USGS Transportation and Hydrography Datasets.



DE NOVO PLANNING GROUP
A LAND USE, PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FIRM

Prepared for the City of Sonoma by De Novo Planning Group
August 14, 2025

Figure 2. Proposed General Plan Land Use Map



- Sonoma City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Sonoma Urban Growth Boundary
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Assessor Parcel Boundary
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Sonoma Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Housing Opportunity
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Use
- Sonoma Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Gateway Commercial
- Public Facility
- Park
- Hillside
- Agriculture
- Utility Parcel
- Open Space Overlay
- Housing Overlay

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