# General Plan 2020
## Safety Element Update
## &
## New Environmental
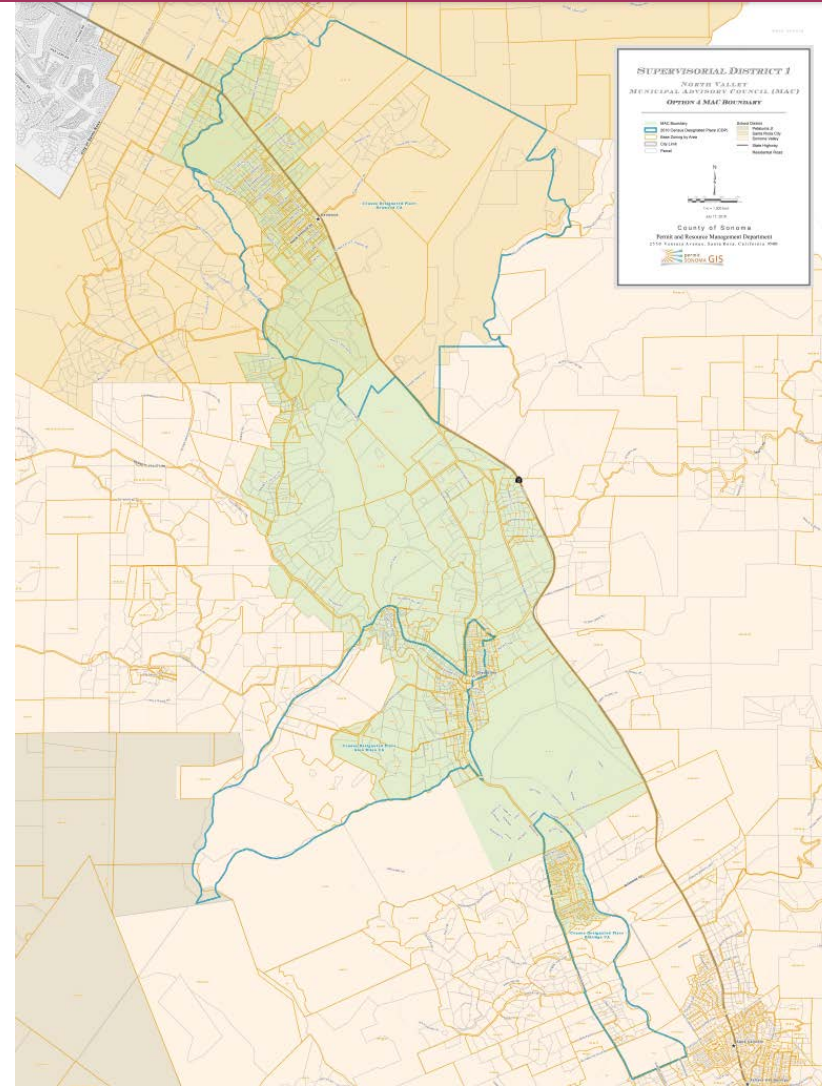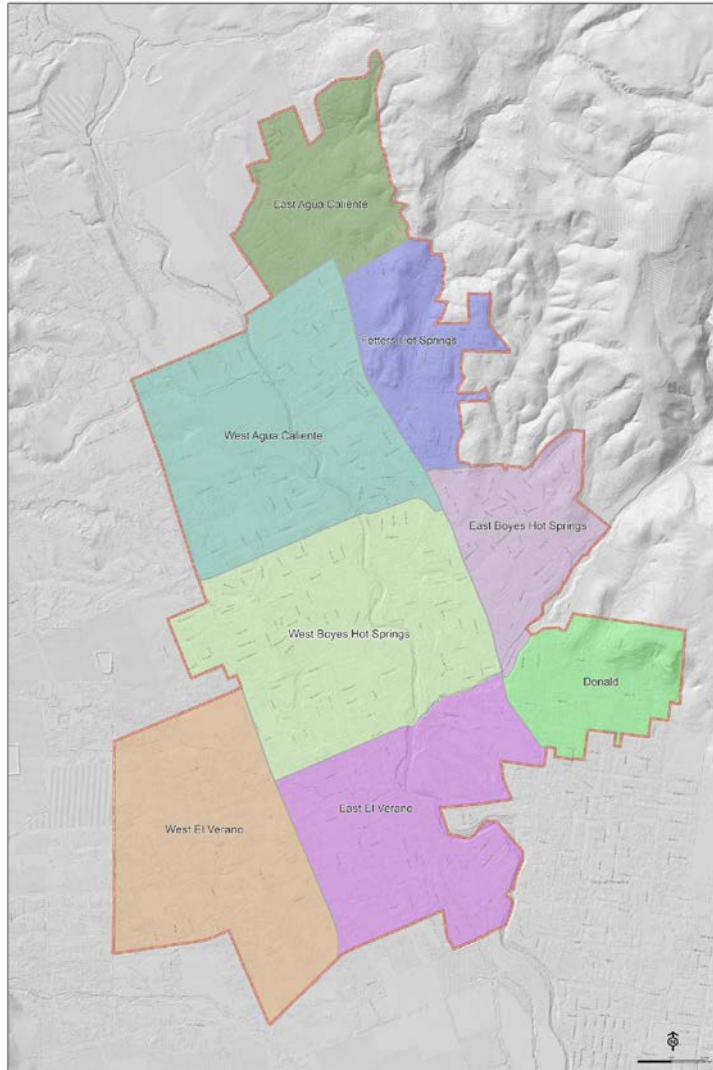## Justice Element

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permit
SONOMA

# Presentation Overview

- Introduction to the General Plan 2020 Safety and Environmental Justice Updates

- Project History and Status

- Overview of the Policymaking Approach

- Discussion on Select Policy Topic Areas

- Q&A, time permitting

# Springs MAC and North Valley MAC Maps

# GENERAL PLAN

➤ Describes the community's vision for Sonoma County

➤ Includes goals, policies, and implementation strategies

➤ Identifies strategies for managing preservation and change

➤ Sets the foundation for the County's Specific Plans and Zoning Code

| | |
|---|---|
| Land Use | Agricultural Resources |
| Open Space and Resource Conservation | Housing |
| Water Resources | Circulation and Transit |
| Air Transportation | Public Facilities and Services |
| Noise | Safety |
| | *NEW* Environmental Justice |

# Safety Element Update

- **Purpose**: Reduce the potential short- and long-term risks to people, property, and systems resulting from hazards
  - Wildfire
  - Flooding
  - Seismic and geologic hazards
  - Sea level rise and other climate-induced hazards
  - Drought
- **New requirements:**
  - Assessments of evacuation route capacity and residential egress
  - Assessment of climate change vulnerability and inclusion of adaptation and resilience policies and implementation measures

# New Environmental Justice Element

- **Purpose:** To identify disadvantaged communities in Sonoma County and prioritize improvements in those areas to advance health
  - Pollution burden
  - Access to public facilities, services, and community amenities
  - Health and physical activity
  - Healthy food access
  - Safe and sanitary housing
  - Civic engagement in the public-decision making process

- **Definition of Environmental Justice:** "The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

  (Government Code § 65040.12(e))

# Project History – Community Engagement Strategy

| Completed |
| --- |
| **5** Equity Working Committee (EWC) meetings |
| **6** stakeholder focus groups with community organizations and County staff |
| **1** countywide online survey on climate adaptation |
| **7** pop-ups at events across the county and with interest groups |

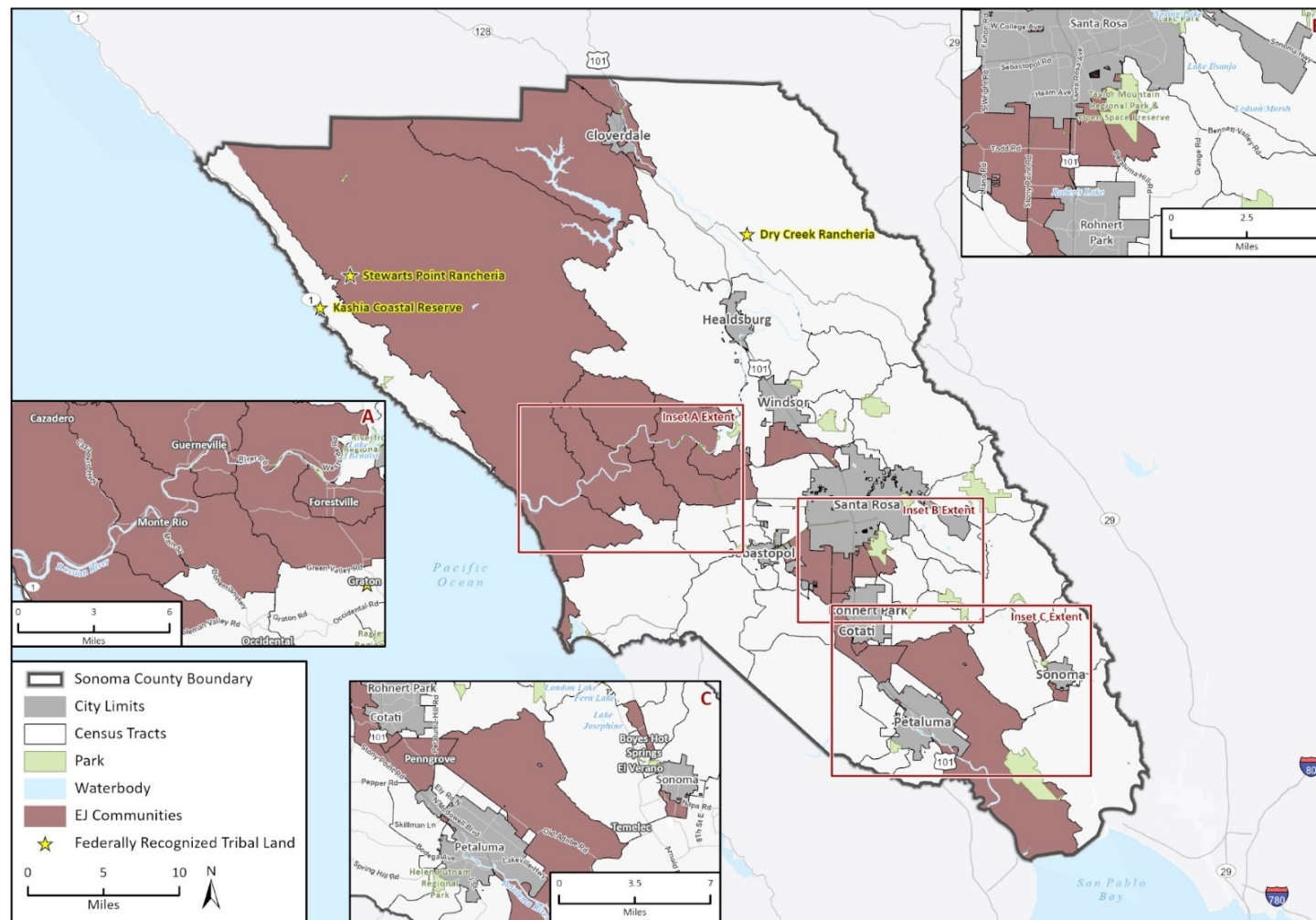| Upcoming |
| --- |
| **1** countywide public workshop |
| **1** additional online survey |
| Municipal/citizen's advisory council/commission meetings |
| **1** Equity Working Committee reflection session |

# Project History – Background Analysis

- **Environmental Justice Technical Report**
  - Identifies EJ Communities and explores data on EJ issues

- **Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment**
  - Explores the vulnerability of populations and County assets (such as parks, agriculture) to climate change

- **Evacuation Route Assessments\***
  - High level assessments of evacuation route capacities and limitations

*In Progress

# Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities

**Draft EJ Communities include:**

1. Low-income census tracts with either:
   - Elevated pollution burden overall
   - Elevated levels of individual pollutants (e.g. pesticides)
   - Elevated housing burden

2. Federally recognized tribal lands



Legend:
- Sonoma County Boundary
- City Limits
- Census Tracts
- Park
- Waterbody
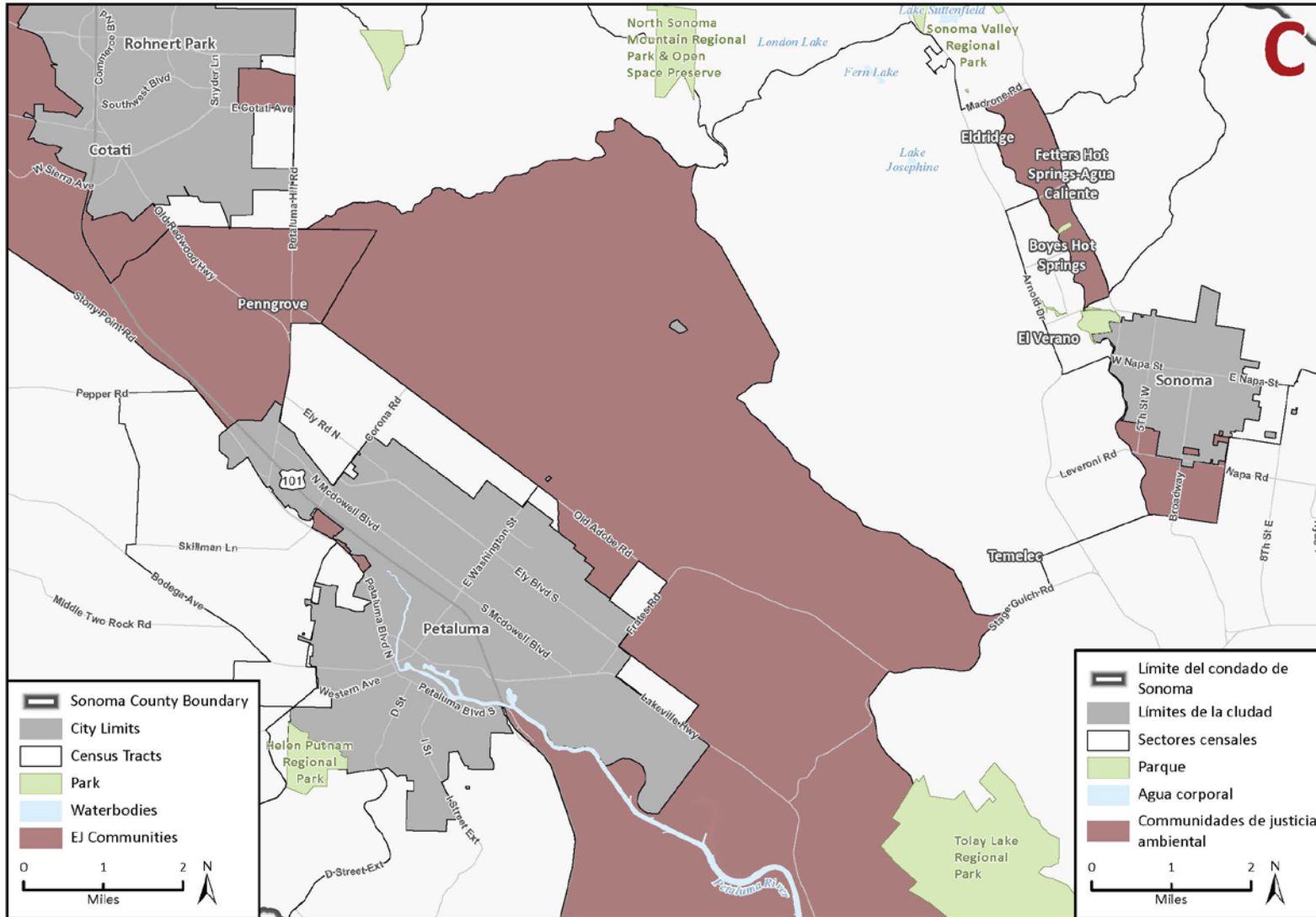- EJ Communities
- ★ Federally Recognized Tribal Land

Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2022; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2022; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

# Fetters Hot Springs- Agua Caliente EJ Communities



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2023.
Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2022; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2022

## EJ Issues Affecting the Sonoma Communities

- >25% of the population within this census tract are affected by housing cost burden

- 86th percentile for housing burden across all census tracts in California

- Highest rates of overcrowding
    - 29% of households deemed overcrowded

- 72nd percentile for linguistic isolation in Sonoma County

# Next Step: Draft Elements

1. Development of draft policies and measures for the elements
2. Release draft elements for public review
3. Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors public hearings for adoption

| Existing Conditions and Data Collection | → | Determination of EJ Communities | → | Strategy Development | → | Draft Elements | → | Review and Adoption |

**Community Engagement**

# Policy Framework Purpose and Structure

- **Purpose of the Frameworks:** Outline desired outcomes of the General Plan and potential policy strategies

  - **Issue Statement:** Summary of the key concerns related to the topic

  - **Key Existing Plans:** Existing Sonoma County documents and plans that may be leveraged and built upon for addressing the issue

  - **Desired Outcome:** A general statement that expresses the outcomes towards which planning efforts are directed

  - **Community Input:** A summary of input received through community engagement efforts

  - **Strategy Ideas:** Statements of intent or direction on how to achieve the desired outcome, which will inform future iterations of the policies that will be included in the General Plan

**General Plan Structure**

- Goal
  - Policy
    - Implementation Action

# EJ Element – Policy Frameworks

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity

Healthy Food Access

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Community Engagement and Language Access

# Key Thoughts

**While we review the policy frameworks, think about:**

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Safe and Sanitary Housing

**Policy Issues**

Housing Quality

Overcrowding

# Issue: Housing Quality

## Background

- Less than one percent of owner households and just over two percent of renter households lack kitchens or have plumbing deficiencies

- HUD has identified 13 key aspects of quality:
  - Space and security
  - Thermal environment
  - Illumination and electricity
  - Structure and materials
  - Interior air quality
  - Water supply
  - Lead-based paint
  - Access
  - Site and neighborhood
  - Smoke detectors

## Input

- Stakeholders stated that farmworkers are particularly impacted by wildfire season and high housing costs in Sonoma County

- Rental and other financial housing assistance is only successful when people are able to locate housing

- Issues of affordability and housing stock are primarily included in the Housing Element

# Issue: Housing Quality

**Desired Outcome**

Improve housing quality throughout the County by prioritizing resources in EJ Communities to improve residents' quality of life and ensure that every home has reliable necessities.

**Potential Strategies**

1. Ensure Homes are Sound and Comfortable
2. Identify Funding for Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
3. Equip Residents with Repair Information
4. Establish Renter Protections from Retaliation  for Requesting Repairs
5. Partner with Legal Aid Groups

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Issue: Overcrowding

**Background**

- The presence of overcrowding may be a significant factor for poor health outcomes
- The Springs neighborhood near the Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West EJ Community has the highest rate of overcrowding, with approximately 29 percent of households deemed to be overcrowded
- The EJ Community in the Jenner/Cazadero area has 16 percent of homes recorded as being overcrowded.

**Input**

- Participants in the EJ Stakeholder Interviews generally felt that rising housing costs are a barrier to many community members. Some lower-income homes have unsafe conditions and are overcrowded

# Issue: Overcrowding

## Desired Outcome

Aim to address overcrowding by alleviating the stressors that lead towards overcrowded homes such as financial burdens and the lack of a wider variety of housing options particularly for lower-income households.

## Potential Strategies

1. Provide Information and Guidance for Rental and Homebuying Assistance
2. Address the Health Impacts of Overcrowding
3. Implement Housing Element

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Community Engagement and Language Access

**Policy Issues**

Limited or Non-English Speakers

# Issue: Limited or Non-English Speakers

**Background**

- 11.26% of the County are limited or non-English speakers

- The primary language spoken by persons with limited English proficiency was Spanish

- Numerous census tracts within the planning area also have significant portions of the population who speak "Asian and Pacific Islander Languages" as classified by the U.S. Census. This includes:

  - Mandarin

  - Vietnamese

  - Khmer

**Input**

- County translated documents aren't always accurate, and some community organizations retranslate documents

# Issue: Limited or Non-English Speakers

## Desired Outcome

Improve the public engagement process by ensuring that residents with varying English proficiency skills and non-English speaking residents are able to participate with the assistance of translated documents and non-English speaking engagement opportunities.

## Potential Strategies

1. Provide Adequate Language Services
2. Utilize and Enforce Strategies in the County's Language Access Plan

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

**Policy Issues**

Infrastructure & Utility Resilience

# Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience (Sewer, Roadways, Bridges, etc.)

## Background

- County's infrastructure will face significant challenges due to climate change
  - Increased emergency response needs could strain systems
  - Electrical infrastructure could be overwhelmed by peaks in demand
  - Hazard events pose a risk of direct structural damage and evacuation

## Input

- Explore alternative power systems such as microgrids

- Increase emergency services, as existing services are understaffed and unable to consistently and appropriately respond to hazards

- Concern regarding utility reliability, particularly water reliability, during and after hazard events

# Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience (Sewer, Roadways, Bridges, etc.)

## Desired Outcome

Transportation and utility systems adequately meet the needs of, and protect the wellbeing of, all community members and emergency personnel in the face of climate change, especially community members most impacted by transportation and utility systems in the face of climate change.

## Potential Strategies

1. Assess, Harden, Weatherize, and Track Weatherization of Critical Facilities
2. Address Gaps in Backup Power Generation
3. Maintain Defensible Space Around Critical Infrastructure
4. Prioritize Resilient Road Design
5. Engage and Empower Rural Communities through Self-Sufficiency
6. Identify Funding for Flooding Infrastructure Improvements
7. Prioritize Equity in Capital Improvement Process

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Safety Element – Policy Frameworks

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought

Emergency Preparedness and Response

All Hazards General Public Safety

Resilient Landscapes (Wildfire)

Sea Level Rise

Seismic and Flooding Hazards

# Key Thoughts

**While we review the policy frameworks, think about:**

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Emergency Preparedness & Response

**Policy Issue**

Alerts and Evacuation

# Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

**Background**

- Barriers to safe and timely evacuation include:
  - Deficiencies in the electrical grid
  - Gaps in the transportation system
  - Spotty telecommunication system
  - Differences in language
  - Lack of adequate emergency facilities and services
  - Lack of evacuation locations
  - Inequitable distribution of resources

**Input**

- Focus on emergency preparedness, not reactivity
- Explore alternative alert systems
- Encourage individual evacuation planning

# Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

## Desired Outcome

Community members, especially those that face systemic inequities, can evacuate safely and timely due to resilient infrastructure, accessible and effective emergency alerts, and improved access to financial resources before, during, and after disasters for recovery.

## Proposed Strategies

1. Prepare Community for Evacuation
2. Retrofit Critical Communications Services
3. Address Accessibility Barriers to Emergency Alert Programs
4. Conduct An Evacuation Needs Assessment
5. Evaluate and Improve Ag Pass Program
6. Advance Worker Evacuation Programs
7. Build Relationships with CBOs to Assist with Evacuation Efforts

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?
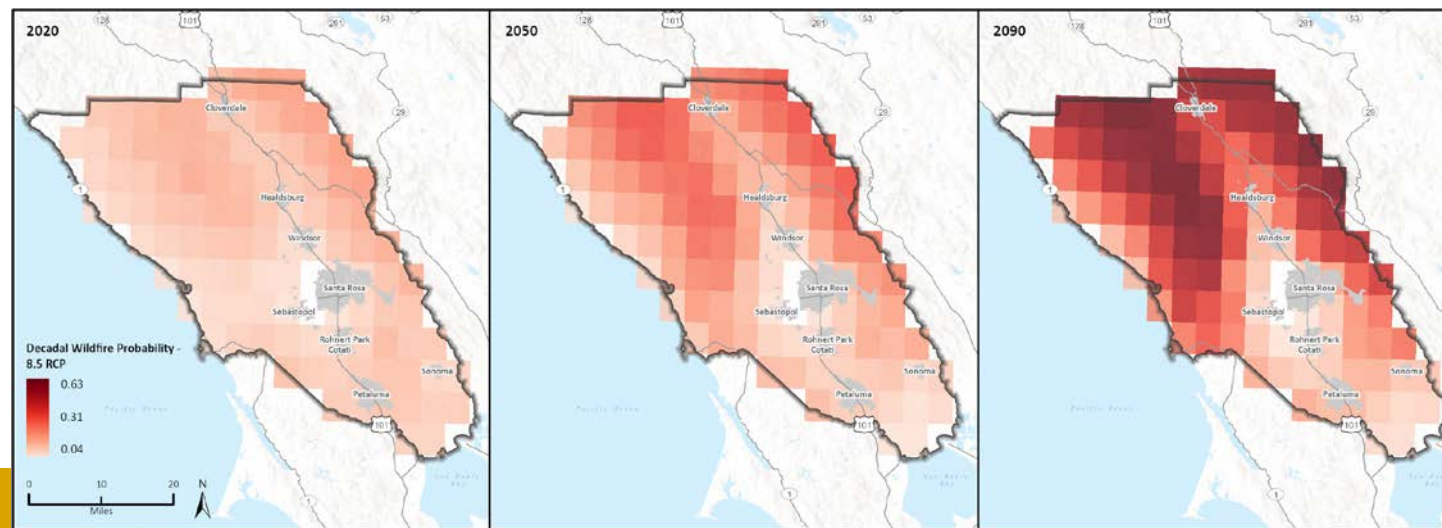
# Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

# Issue: Wildfire

**Background**

- Over 400,000 acres burned in Sonoma County since 2015

- Increasing wildfire frequency and severity will result in human and wildlife risk, loss of habitat and agriculture, and loss of available food sources and seed bank

- Habitat loss may not recover depending on the type of land cover that is destroyed in a wildfire and quick succession fires can prevent or delay the recovery of natural systems

**Input**

- High concern regarding air quality during fire season for both residents and workers

- Improve home hardening and buffers to protect properties

- County needs improved power and communications systems during emergencies

- Concerns regarding the financial burdens fires create

# Issue: Wildfire

## Desired Outcome

Prevent unnecessary exposure of people and property to risks from wildland and structural fires, with priority on outdoor workers, shelterless populations, and populations most at risk of exposure during fires

*Note: An "\*" indicates an existing Safety Element goal or objective.*

## Proposed Strategies

1. *Use Complete Data
2. *Regulate New Development
3. *Utilize the Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan and CWPP
4. Improve Post-Fire Relocation and Other Housing Assistance Programs
5. Promote Community Preparation
6. Explore Alternative Fire Prevention Measures
7. Streamline CEQA Review for Fuel Reduction
8. Equitable Resilience Assistance
9. Safeguard Business Continuity

# Discussion (10-15 minutes)

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

# Questions?

- Environmental Justice and Safety Element Updates
  - Katrina Braehmer, Katrina.Braehmer@sonoma-county.org
  - Claudette Diaz, Claudette.Diaz@sonoma-county.org

- General Plan Update
  - GeneralPlan@sonoma-county.org

- Resources:
  - July 23, 2024, Board of Supervisors Workshop Materials
  - Environmental Justice and Safety Element Update Webpage

# Thank you!