



Sonoma County Community Development Commission
Sonoma County Housing Authority
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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 20, 2024

To: Community Development Committee (CD Committee)
Cities and Towns Advisory Committee (CTAC)

From: Veronica Ortiz-De Anda, Community Development Associate

Subject: Napa/Sonoma Regional Fair Housing Plan to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing

Background

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, known as the Fair Housing Act, requires the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and recipients of federal funds from HUD to affirmatively further the policies and requirements of the act. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, and disability by landlords, property managers, and other housing providers as well as municipalities, lending institutions, and insurance companies. As a participating jurisdiction of HUD entitlement grant programs, Sonoma County is required to take meaningful actions to combat discrimination, overcome patterns of segregation, and foster inclusivity in the community by removing barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on the aforementioned characteristics.

Formerly known as the “Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice”, the assessment to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) identifies patterns of discrimination and segregation, including contributing factors, and the populations impacted. The AFFH addresses inequities identified among protected classes, promotes integration and transformation of concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity. The AFFH includes goals and specific actions to combat discrimination and segregation, thereby fostering inclusivity and opportunity for all members of the community.

The AFFH for Sonoma County was prepared as a regional fair housing plan with the County of Napa. The Napa/Sonoma AFFH functioned as a planning process for local governments and public housing agencies. This process was designed to help jurisdictions meet fair housing requirements while taking necessary actions to overcome historic and current patterns of segregation and promote fair housing choice. The regional approach also allows the neighboring jurisdictions to



align their efforts in addressing the identified disparities in housing and services and the contributing factors that generated them, which will have a more meaningful impact to community members throughout the region.

Public Participation

Public participation is an integral factor in any policy effort addressing equity and equality in housing and is required by HUD for purposes of the AFFH. In 2019, Sonoma County partnered with the cities of Petaluma and Santa Rosa to complete a community engagement effort with the public and stakeholders in the community. Special attention was made by the engagement team to reach out to neighborhoods composed of Black and Indigenous people of color as well as non-English speakers. Some of the questions asked included:

- Race/Ethnicity,
- Primary language used in the home,
- Whether the respondent owns or rents their home,
- For renters, had they experienced a rent increase in the last five years and the amount of the increase,
- If they have access to essential housing features such as recycling and garbage services, homeowner or renters insurance, functioning bathroom, kitchen, suitable plumbing, source of heat, and safe drinking water,
- If they have ever experienced discrimination, and if so, the type of discrimination and location where it occurred,
- Whether they use public transportation or have their own vehicle as a mode of transportation,
- Whether they have employment and if so, do they hold more than one job and in what kind of industry,
- If someone in their household receives government assistance,
- If they have access to health care, including mental health care, and parks,
- If they have access to fresh and healthy food and the types of establishments, they visit to purchase their food,
- If they have access to community events, and
- The types of community features they would like to have access to.

Outreach was also made to organizations that work directly and indirectly with community members. Over twenty community based and housing organizations participated in this planning process, which included representation from La Luz Center, MidPen Housing, Petaluma Health Center, Reach for Home, Japanese American Citizens League, Saint Vincent de Paul Youth Commission, and Graton Day Labor Center. Stakeholders were asked questions regarding impacts of the housing crisis, access to transportation and employment, exposure to poverty, discrimination, sense of belonging, and support systems available to the public.

The engagement team conducted outreach by holding neighborhood meetings in English and Spanish along with bilingual focus groups, and online surveys. The team also utilized bilingual canvassers that went door-to-door throughout selected neighborhoods to help members of the public complete questionnaires. In-person outreach began before the onset of the pandemic and shifted to virtual meetings and interviews during the mandated closure. Door-to-door interviews resulted in 130 responses. Fifty-four (54) persons participated in focus groups and 446 online surveys were completed. Stakeholder conversations and interviews included a total of 29 organizations throughout the five districts of Sonoma County.

The results of the public engagement conducted indicate that most of the public fears they will be unable to afford their home given the pace of rent increases and the lack of affordable housing; respondents indicated having experienced some type of discrimination during their residency in Sonoma County; respondents indicated they felt disconnected from their local government and they do not contact them when there is a need in their neighborhood; respondents stated there are barriers to equitable employment that pays a living wage as well as barriers to accessing services and resources due to geographical distances, business hours, and lack of culturally responsive providers; and there is a lack of access to mental trauma support systems for people of color, which was most felt after the catastrophic series of wildfires in the county and the pandemic.

The community engagement report titled, “Analysis of Impediments to Healthy and Thriving Communities” dated January 5, 2021, provides more information about the approach taken to select areas to solicit public participation, methodology used to seek input, participation rate, analysis, and findings. The report can be found in Attachment 1 of the draft AFFH.

Sonoma County Demographic Data and Segregation Trends

Data obtained from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey shows that the majority of the county’s population is White, followed by Hispanic and Latino residents, and then Non-Hispanic Asian American or Pacific Islanders, Non-Hispanic Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Native Americans, which make up the least portion of the population. Spanish is the second language most spoken in the county, followed by other Indo-European language. The most common type of disability experienced by Sonoma County residents is ambulatory, followed by independent living difficulty, and cognitive disability. The tables below provide additional data on these demographic factors.

Table 1 – Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White, Non-Hispanic	316,022	63.2%
Hispanic/Latino	133,569	26.7%
Asian/Pacific Island, Non-Hispanic	21,565	4.3%
Black, Non-Hispanic	7,399	1.5%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	2,343	0.5%

Table 2 – Other Country of Origin

Country of Origin	Number	Percent
Mexico	46,768	10.0%
China, excludes Taiwan	2,383	0.5%
Philippines	2,361	0.5%
El Salvador	2,295	0.5%
Other South Eastern Asia	2,222	0.5%
Canada	1,823	0.4%
Other Central America	1,632	0.4%
Germany	1,528	0.3%
Eastern Africa	1,446	0.3%
India	1,390	0.3%

Table 3 – Limited English Proficiency Language

Language	Number	Percent
Spanish	42,419	9.1%
Other Indo-European Language	2,432	0.5%
Other Asian and Pacific Language	1,793	0.4%
Chinese	1,628	0.4%

Language	Number	Percent
Vietnamese	766	0.2%
Tagalog	667	0.1%
Slavic Language	542	0.1%
West Germanic	287	0.1%
Korean	285	0.1%

Table 4 – Disability

Disability Type	Number	Percent
Ambulatory	28,256	6.0%
Independent Living	21,018	5.3%
Cognitive	21,725	4.6%
Hearing	18,277	3.7%
Self-Care	11,921	2.5%
Vision	9,268	1.9%

Trends indicate that Sonoma County has become more diverse over time, however, not necessarily more integrated. Since 1990, the White population has been decreasing from 84.3%, 74.5% in 2000, 66.1% in 2010, and 63.2% currently. Hispanic/Latino residents have been rising from 10.6% in 1990 to 26.7% in most recent estimates. Additional details on demographic data can be found in pages 9-13 of the draft AFFH.

Overall, data indicates that segregation in Sonoma County is relatively low, however, it has been increasing since 2010. The “Dissimilarity Index”, which measures the percentage of a certain group’s population that would have to move to a different census tract in order to be evenly distributed within a city or metropolitan area with another group, is in the low and mid 30’s for Sonoma County, however, it has increased since 1990 as shown in the table below.

Table 5 – Dissimilarity Index Values by Race and Ethnicity (the higher the index, the higher the extent of the segregation)

Integration of Groups	1990	2000	2010	Current
Non-White/White	18.57	26.7	27.32	32.60
Black/White	33.75	29.48	27.88	36.81
Hispanic/White	24.35	33.42	32.70	36.12
Asian or Pacific Islander/White	26.00	28.18	26.45	31.13

Findings

Despite a low “Dissimilarity Index” in Sonoma County, research and analysis of data did find disproportionate housing needs amongst populations of color, particularly those living below the poverty line. Additionally, there are disparities related to access and opportunity across various sectors for both White and populations of color. Populations of color living below the poverty line experience the most adverse impact in certain sectors when compared to their White counterparts that also live below the poverty line. These disparities include:

- Disparities in access to proficient schools,
- Disparities in access to employment with a living wage,
- Disparities in access to transportation,
- Disparities in access to low poverty neighborhoods,
- Disparities in access to environmentally healthy neighborhoods,
- Disparities in access to opportunity – Patterns in Disparities

A number of different contributing factors to the disparities listed above were identified during public engagement as well as in the data. These contributing factors include a lack of access to financial services, lack of access to proficient schools by both students with and without disabilities, lack of affordable housing in a range of sizes for households with and without a household member who has a disability, location of environmental hazards, impediments to housing mobility, lack of access to transportation services and infrequent availability of public transportation services, community opposition to affordable housing projects, lending discrimination, source of income discrimination, and lack of private and public investment in specific neighborhoods. A total of 44 different contributing factors were identified. A complete list of these factors can be found on pages 3 and 102 of the draft AFFH.

Goals and Specific Actions

To combat discrimination, address segregation trends, and create opportunities for all community members that will promote integration and inclusivity, the following goals and specific actions (listed below each goal), have been established in the draft AFFH. A complete discussion of the goals and actions starts on page 97 of the draft AFFH:

1. Increase the supply of affordable housing in higher opportunity areas and areas with ongoing or threatened displacement.
 - a. Promote affordable housing bond at multiple levels of government.
 - b. Create and maintain an inventory list of sites where housing development is allowed, including affordable housing in High Opportunity Areas, that will address the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirements for all income levels with special focus on lower-income housing.
 - c. Provide incentives to single-family homeowners and/or grants to homeowners with household incomes of up to 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI) to develop accessory dwelling units (ADUs) with affordability restrictions on their property.
 - d. Prioritize publicly owned land and reduce permit fees for affordable housing.
2. Meet the housing and services needs of migrant and year-round farmworkers.
 - a. Reform zoning and land use laws to permit safe farmworker housing in areas where agricultural uses predominate.
 - b. Target farmworkers for affordable housing opportunities in towns and cities through preferences or affirmative marketing.
 - c. Study means of increasing access to supportive services in rural parts of Napa County and Sonoma County.
3. Reduce zoning and land use barriers to the development of housing that is affordable to low-income households, including low-income people of color and low-income persons with disabilities.
 - a. Create affordable housing overlay districts and or rezone parcels to enable mix-income multifamily housing with a significant affordable component in higher opportunity areas.
 - b. For qualifying jurisdictions, as per California SB10, adopt an ordinance to allow up to ten dwelling units on any parcel that is within transit-rich area or urban in-fill site.
 - c. Update the zoning codes across the region to reflect recent changes to California laws that are designed to increase affordable housing.
4. Increase access to opportunity for Housing Choice Voucher households.
 - a. Explore the feasibility of housing authorities to adopt small area fair market rents or exception payment standards for regional sub-markets.
 - b. Engage municipal attorneys in enforcing prohibitions against source of income discrimination.

5. Prevent displacement by preserving affordable housing and protecting tenants' rights.
 - a. Expand funding for tenants in landlord-tenant proceedings.
 - b. Study the viability of rent stabilization for mobile home (manufactured) park developments.
 - c. Track and collaborate to preserve affordable housing developments with expiring subsidy contracts countywide.
 - d. Create a right of first refusal for manufactured home park residents to purchase their communities when owners seek to sell or redevelop their properties.

6. Reduce homelessness by expanding the supply of permanent supportive housing.
 - a. Prioritize federal HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for developments that include permanent supportive housing units.
 - b. Advocate for public housing authorities to adopt preferences in their Housing Choice Voucher program for individuals with disabilities who are institutionalized or at risk of institutionalization.

7. Increase support for fair housing enforcement, education, and outreach.

Public Comment

In accordance with the Sonoma County Citizen Participation Plan for HUD programs, the draft AFFH was published for a 30-day public review period, from Thursday, February 8, 2024, through Monday, March 11, 2024. The public notice for the hearing and the availability of the draft for public comment was published in two local newspapers, including a newspaper for Spanish readers, and on the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) website. Additionally, a bulletin was disbursed to all subscribers of CDC news via email, and a public service announcement was aired on a local radio station in English and Spanish. As of the preparation of this memorandum, one public comment was received via email and is included as Attachment 2 to this memo. Additional public comment received after the preparation of this memorandum will be shared and addressed at the committee meeting.

Next Steps

The draft AFFH will go before the Board of Supervisors on or about April 30, 2024 for review and approval. After such time, it will be submitted to HUD.

Requested Action: Review and recommend approval of the draft Napa/Sonoma County AFFH to the Board of Supervisors

Attachment 1 – Draft of Napa/Sonoma County AFFH

Attachment 2 – Public Comments on draft AFFH