



Office of the City Manager
The City of Sonoma

MEMORANDUM

City of Sonoma 2024 Council Goals: Status Update

As we continue through 2024 and head into 2025, we are pleased to provide an update on the progress and accomplishments related to the City of Sonoma's Council Goals for this year. These goals reflect our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all residents, promoting sustainable growth, and ensuring that Sonoma remains a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community.

1. Housing

Goal: Address housing needs across all levels, from affordable housing to market-rate residences, and develop compassionate strategies to support and house unhoused community members.

Accomplishments:

- **Housing Element Implementation:** We started streamlining processes and simplifying procedures to accelerate the approval and development of housing projects. Efforts to create fair fee structures are underway, ensuring financial viability for developers while maintaining affordability for residents.
- **Funding:** The City approved a resolution supporting the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority Housing Bond on the November 5th ballot. Unfortunately, this measure that had the potential of bringing between \$15M-\$23M to the City of Sonoma for use in building Affordable Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing was pulled from the November ballot. Staff is continuing to look for other sources of funding that will assist with the development of affordable housing.
- **Affordable Housing Projects:**
 - In 2024, Planning Commission approved one new 31 unit housing development with two affordable units and a 50 unit housing development with 13 affordable units is currently under review.
 - Two additional developments were issued building permits in 2024 providing 19 new units, three of which will be affordable.
 - Shared affordable housing opportunities through the city's auto notification capability, currently have 756 subscribers who have signed up to receive news and announcements regarding affordable housing

- **Homelessness Initiatives:**

- In the 2024/25 budget, the City has allocated funds to support HAS, SOS, and the By-Names List (BNL) program, reinforcing our commitment to addressing homelessness in Sonoma Valley.
- Sonoma Valley received Measure O funding to expand outreach services by onboarding two additional case managers through a partnership between HomeFirst and SAVS. The City remains dedicated to advocating for services that address homelessness across Sonoma Valley, working to identify service gaps and actively participating in BNL and Continuum of Care (COC) meetings.
- The City has recently permitted an outreach van to be parked on City-owned property every evening to support the regions homelessness service efforts, this allows the team more time to engage with the homeless as they don't have to drive to and from Petaluma to pick up the vehicle daily.
- New to the Valley is the Keeping People Housed program, set to launch in December 2024, will provide free financial assistance and legal support for eligible households. This program offers aid for rent, utilities, eviction prevention, and other urgent needs.
- City staff has also submitted a funding request under the County's Measure O Homeless Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for three critical projects: winter shelter operations, a landlord incentive program, and an extension of the Sonoma Valley BNL program.

2. Annexation/Unification

Goal: Explore annexation options and opportunities for areas adjacent to the City of Sonoma, ensuring a transparent and inclusive public engagement process.

Accomplishments:

- **Valley Representation on Boards and Commissions:** The Council has updated its Board and Commission policies to dedicate 2 positions on each board and commission to someone living in Sonoma Valley outside of the City Limits. The purpose of this was to provide a way for the broader community to have input on City projects that could impact the Valley as a whole.
- **Community Engagement:** Staff worked with the County to create a draft community engagement process to gather input from both current city residents and those in the potential annexation areas. The goal of this outreach is to understand the need and to obtain data that could be used in determining what steps the City and county could take to address those needs. This process will ensure that all voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. The next step is to bring the proposed plan to the City Council for approval prior to the start of the outreach effort.

- **Emergency Response:** Staff participated in Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative's Equitable Community Resilience Project. "Local Roadmaps to Community Resilience" which centered around emergency preparedness focused on an identified "disadvantaged" census tract 06097150305. This census tract is located in the "Springs".
- **Regional Projects/Funding:**
 - The City Council approved individual \$3,000 funding opportunities to organizations in the City and in the Valley that provide projects and programs that inspire creativity, foster community connection and strengthen partnerships, all aimed at enhancing the quality of life for everyone in Sonoma Valley.
 - The City Council has approved \$200,000 in funding to support homeless services throughout Sonoma Valley. These funds were allocated to SOS and HAS to enhance service provision in the area. In addition, the City of Sonoma actively participates in By-Names List (BNL) meetings, working to identify service needs and pursue funding opportunities, including grant writing, to support these initiatives.
 - Staff is working with the County to start the process of creating an EIFD for the Valley including the City to support infrastructure utilizing tax increment.
 - Staff is working with regional service providers to evaluate possible sharing of services to reduce redundancies, increase efficiencies and reduce costs of operating and maintaining multiple systems.

3. Economic Development/Revenue Stewardship

Goal: Foster economic vitality through a business-friendly environment, support small businesses, and explore revenue-enhancing strategies.

Accomplishments:

- **Business Support Programs:**
 - Staff has worked with the Chamber and local restaurants, hotels and businesses to identify ways to increase foot traffic including testing of a new downtown shuttle, expanding hours, modifying the sidewalk seating program, and increasing events and food options later in the evening.
 - Continued sponsorship of Sonoma Art Walk - First Thursdays supporting our arts and business communities by bringing people downtown during 'off-peak' season.
 - Supported and facilitated the extension of the Tourism Improvement District (TID) to provide outreach and event support to attract visitors during off-peak times.

- **Finance Process and Procedures:**

- Hired a Finance Director
- Implemented OpenGov to enhance transparency and public education regarding the City's finances
- Completed 2 years of back audits and working to get caught up this year which is crucial for determining accurate audited balances.
- Performed review and clean up of all City Accounts

- **Revenue Enhancement:**

- The City Council approved a ½ cent sales tax revenue measure for the November 2024 ballot. Ballot measure passed with approximately 60% of the vote.
- The City Council approved a contract with HDL to review and identify businesses that have not paid or have underpaid TOT and Business License tax.
- Staff has started a fee study to address city wide fees to ensure fees are generating the funding needed to provide the desired services including development fees, event fees, etc.
- Staff has moved cash funds into a higher interest yield account to generate increased revenue
- City Council approved an updated investment policy and use of an investment manager to start investing cash in low-risk investments
- The City Council has approved the use of the Field of Dreams for Transcendence Theatre Company's summer event series. This collaboration has brought significant benefits to the City of Sonoma, including increased sales tax revenue driven by ticket sales and the spending of visitors at local restaurants, bars, tasting rooms, and hotels.
- Sonoma's Tuesday Night Farmers Market: Celebrating Community and Local Vitality. Sonoma's Tuesday Night Farmers Market is a cherished, 20-week community gathering held from May through September, embodying the spirit of connection, sustainability, and local pride. This event not only brings friends and neighbors together weekly but also strengthens our local economy by providing a thriving venue for farmers to sell fresh produce and for local artisans and food vendors to share their products. Each week, local musicians add to the vibrant atmosphere, celebrating Sonoma's unique culture and creativity. This year's market successfully met its revenue goals, covering all operational expenses, including staffing, while continuing to foster a strong community spirit and support for local small businesses.

- **Arts:** Updating the City's Public Art Policy to include temporary art installations to not only serve as a catalyst for urban beautification, cultural enrichment, and social cohesion but also promoting economic development by establishing Sonoma as a vibrant art destination.

4. Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Goal: Position Sonoma as a leader in climate action by implementing climate action strategies and promoting sustainable practices.

Accomplishments:

- **Climate Action Strategies Progress:** The Climate Action Commission and staff are working on advancing key initiatives from the Climate Action Strategy approved by Council.
- **Sustainability Measures:**
 - 2 New electric vehicles were purchased for the PW fleet including charging stations installed at the yard
 - City is evaluating an electric Street Sweeper
 - The city is working with Sonoma County Transit to maintain an electric bus for the free bus route funded by the City. Conversations are underway to coordinate EV upgrades at the PW yard to house the Electric Bus overnight.
 - City is working with the Chamber and Tourism Bureau to test a shuttle from hotels to downtown
 - City applied for funding to support rebates for turf removal
- **Community Engagement:** The city has actively engaged the community in climate action efforts, encouraging residents and businesses to adopt sustainable practices and participate in local climate initiatives.

5. Parks and Recreation/Community Services

Goal: Enhance recreational sites and services, create a comprehensive plan for Plaza Park, and explore conservation easements to protect natural resources.

Accomplishments:

- **Parks and Recreation Department:** Initial steps have been taken to create a Parks and Recreation Department. This includes successful passage of a new tax revenue measure to support the department's staffing and operational needs. With the passage of this measure, a new Parks Director position is being created.

- **Plaza Park Corridor Planning:**

- Initial review of steps to develop a comprehensive master plan and landscape management plan for Plaza Park has stated including initiation of a survey for the plaza to use as the base for future projects. Future project includes developing a Parks Corridor connecting Mountain Cemetery, Field of Dreams, Depot Park, County and state properties to the Plaza. Further discussion is needed to provide input on scope and vision.
- Completed successful negotiations with State Parks to complete a joint adaptive reuse project to relocate the Visitor Center to the Toscano Hotel.

- **TREES:**

- Staff held multiple joint meetings of the Planning Commission, Parks Recreation Open Space Commission, and the Climate Action Commission to develop a set of priorities and actions for future tree policy development.
- Staff held a study session with the City Council to review the current street tree program and to get feedback and input on changes to the program such as waiving encroachment permit fees, extending deadlines, and extending permit review.
- Updated sidewalk policy to include alternative materials (such as pervious pavement) for sidewalk construction to address the desire to fix sidewalk displacements while saving street trees.

- **Cemeteries:**

- Working on increasing interment space for all cemeteries
- Created cemetery brochure for families, funeral homes
- Updated cemetery website info, FAQs, contact form, terminology
- Implementing outsourcing for casket burials
- Working on updating cemetery contracts & forms
- Working on creating donation options for cemetery improvements
- Reviewing endowment care & misc fees for updates
- Building interment log to efficiently track burial data
- Providing more thorough, hands-on customer service for families

- **Community Engagement and Volunteerism:** The city has expanded opportunities for community engagement and volunteerism, particularly in support of local arts and the preservation of the historic cemetery, further strengthening the sense of community in Sonoma.

- **Recreation and Community Services Discretionary Funding Program-** Launched in the spring of 2024, the City's Recreation and Community Services Discretionary Funding

Program awarded a total of \$44,328 to 20 local non-profit organizations. This program supported a range of community-focused projects, including:

- Donations to the Vintage House meal program and pet food pantries.
- Outdoor physical and team challenges for K-12 mentees.
- Utility subsidies for individuals in need through FISH.
- The student film showcases at the 28th annual Sonoma Film Festival.
- Community enrichment events by ArtEscape.
- Financial support for local events, including the Vintage Festival, Red and White Ball, Community Baby Shower, Call of the Wild Free Community Day, Children's Day at Sonoma Garden Park, Valley of the Moon Music Festival Free Kids and Family Concert, and SVMA Family Make-In events.
- The City also provided subsidies or grants for instruction and recreational programs in partnership with local organizations, including Sonoma Conservatory of Dance, Hanna Center, Sonoma Valley United Soccer League, Sonoma Youth Lacrosse, and Sonoma Valley Girls Softball.

Park Infrastructure/Planning/Improvements:

- Developed a process for making recommendations on how to allocate Measure M "Parks for All" funds with increased opportunities for public input.
- New trash cans and bike racks installed at the Plaza
- Bathroom upgrades completed in the Plaza
- Working on Olsen Park Improvement project Plans, Specifications and Estimate
- Palm tree pruning and lighting reinstallation/new contract for palm tree lighting
- Removed a sidewalk displacement caused by a tree root and poured new concrete sidewalk near Carnegie
- Upgrade at Nathanson Creek Park including landscaping, fence and bollards
- New drinking fountain installation in the Plaza
- Worked with Bartlett Tree Co. to complete a health assessment/healthy diagnosis of American Elm #103 in the Plaza
- Rehabilitation of volleyball court at Depot Park
- Worked with PROS ad hoc and completed draft City of Sonoma Tree List that includes location appropriate tree types
- Completed all project planning for Spring construction start on CIP project P-14 Sonoma Overlook Trail HCF Grant project

Conclusion

The City of Sonoma has made significant progress in achieving the 2024 Council Goals, and we are committed to building on these successes throughout the remainder of the year. These

accomplishments reflect our dedication to making Sonoma a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive community.

We will continue to work closely with our residents, businesses, and community partners to ensure that Sonoma remains a place where everyone can live, work, and enjoy the unique quality of life that our city offers.

The City Council will hold a goal setting process for 2025 in late January to review these goals and to provide any changes, updates or modifications for the upcoming year.