

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

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April 13, 2023

Sue Casey, Acting City Manager
City of Sonoma
No. 1 The Plaza
Sonoma, CA 95476

Dear Sue Casey:

RE: City of Sonoma's 6th Cycle (2023-2031) Adopted Housing Element

Thank you for submitting the City of Sonoma's (City) housing element adopted on January 31, 2023, and received for review on February 14, 2023, including modifications received on March 29, 2023, authorized by Resolution Number 09-2023. Pursuant to Government Code section 65585, subdivision (h), the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is reporting the results of its review. Our review was facilitated by a telephone conversation on March 10, 2023, with Laura Simpson, Interim Planning Director, and the City's consultants Beth Thompson, Perry Banner and Kim Fowler.

HCD is pleased to find the adopted housing element in full compliance with State Housing Element Law (Article 10.6 of the Gov. Code). The adopted element, including non-substantive modifications, which was posted on the City's website, addresses the statutory requirements described in HCD's January 24, 2023, review. The housing element is deemed to substantially comply with Housing Element Law as of April 13, 2023.

Additionally, the City must continue timely and effective implementation of all programs, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Program 5: Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units
- Program 7: Affordable Housing Funding Sources
- Program 8: Affordable Housing Impact Fees
- Program 14: Design Guidelines and Design Review
- Program 15: Development Code Amendments – Housing Constraints
- Program 17: Growth Management Ordinance
- Program 20: Adequate Sites for Lower Income Households on Nonvacant and Vacant Sites Previously Identified
- Program 22: Affirmatively Further Fair Housing

The City must monitor and report on the results of these and other programs through the annual progress report, required pursuant to Government Code section 65400. Please be aware, Government Code section 65585, subdivision (i), grants HCD authority to review any action or failure to act by a local government that it determines is inconsistent with an adopted housing element or housing element law. This includes failure to implement program actions included in the housing element. HCD may revoke housing element compliance if the local government's actions do not comply with state law.

HCD is also monitoring the City's processing of the DeNova Homes/Montaldo Apartments application. In the housing element's site inventory, the City identified the project as a pending project suitable for residential development in the planning period. HCD encourages the City to quickly process and approve this project application as the site was also included as part of the sites inventory to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) in the 4th and 5th cycle planning periods. In addition, discretionary decisions in relation to CEQA should not unduly constrain development. HCD reminds the City that excessive CEQA review timeframes can delay project approval and pose a constraint to the development of housing.

Several federal, state, and regional funding programs consider housing element compliance as an eligibility or ranking criteria. For example, the CalTrans Senate Bill (SB) 1 Sustainable Communities grant; the Strategic Growth Council and HCD's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities programs; and HCD's Permanent Local Housing Allocation consider housing element compliance and/or annual reporting requirements pursuant to Government Code section 65400. With a compliant housing element, the City meets housing element requirements for these and other funding sources.

HCD wishes Sonoma success in implementing its housing element and looks forward to following the City's progress through the annual progress report pursuant to Government Code section 65400. If HCD can provide assistance in implementing the housing element, please contact Fidel Herrera of our staff, at Fidel.Herrera@HCD.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melinda Coy", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Melinda Coy
Proactive Housing Accountability Chief