

City of Sonoma

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City of Sonoma Hires New Community Development Director

SONOMA, CA --- The City of Sonoma (City) is delighted to announce the appointment of Jennifer M. Gates, AICP as the new Community Development Director. Ms. Gates, who relocated to Sonoma last year, brings a wealth of experience and expertise in strategic planning, policy development, and community engagement to her new role.

Ms. Gates is a skilled leader and planner who has successfully overseen communitywide projects and worked closely with stakeholders to improve the experience for residents and visitors. With a strong passion for effective policy decisions and data-driven decision-making, Ms. Gates has consistently improved program efficiencies through her analytical skills and public engagement strategies.

In addition to overseeing planning, building, sustainability, housing and code enforcement, Ms. Gates will have the opportunity to build and shape this newly formed department and oversee a budget of approximately \$1.8 million. By unifying several departments under Ms. Gates' leadership and the Community Development umbrella, the City will be able to streamline operations and services for the public and development community while strengthening communication with staff across her departments. Ms. Gates' extensive experience in managing and mentoring staff, effective project management, and diverse community engagement make her an ideal candidate for this crucial role.

Jennifer M. Gates brings over 18 years of diverse government experience with a focus on planning and historic preservation. Prior to joining the City of Sonoma, Ms. Gates held several notable positions, including the Planning Manager of Policy and Housing at the City of Encinitas, where she was responsible for the development of implementation policy including SB 9, objective design standards, expedited permit process for housing developments, cannabis regulations, and short-term rental regulations, to name a few. She also coordinated the development of the City of Encinitas' Sixth Cycle Housing Element with an on-time adoption by the City Council and certification by the State, which is now being implemented. Most recently, she was the County of Marin's strategic projects manager where she worked with County departments to implement performance management measures, a new electronic agenda management system and a comprehensive fee update.

Jennifer obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma, before completing two master's degrees in City Planning and Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She is a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners.

City Manager David Guhin expressed great enthusiasm for Ms. Gates' appointment, stating, "We are thrilled to have Jennifer Gates join our team as the Community Development Director. Her impressive background

and expertise will be instrumental in guiding our city's growth and development in a creative, inclusive and sustainable manner. We look forward to working with her to realize the goals for a bright future in the City of Sonoma."

Part of this work will be to lead the City's upcoming update to the General Plan, implement the City's new Housing Element as well as develop, set, and implement new customer service level standards to ensure improved permit turnaround times. Ms. Gates will officially start in her new role on June 22nd at an annual salary of \$162,076.

Ms. Gates says, "I am fortunate to live in Sonoma and am grateful and excited for the opportunity to serve in this new role. I'm eager to collaborate with staff, residents, businesses, and local organizations to ensure responsible and community-driven development practices that preserve the city's unique historic character while meeting the evolving needs of our community."

Ms. Gates calls the City of Sonoma home. Off-hours are spent exploring new hiking trails with her dog Gatsby and visiting the historic sites and wineries in the area. Jennifer enjoys traveling around the world seeing new places and spending time with her family.

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