



Sonoma County Wildfire Prevention, Emergency Alert & Response Measure

December 17, 2019



The Problem

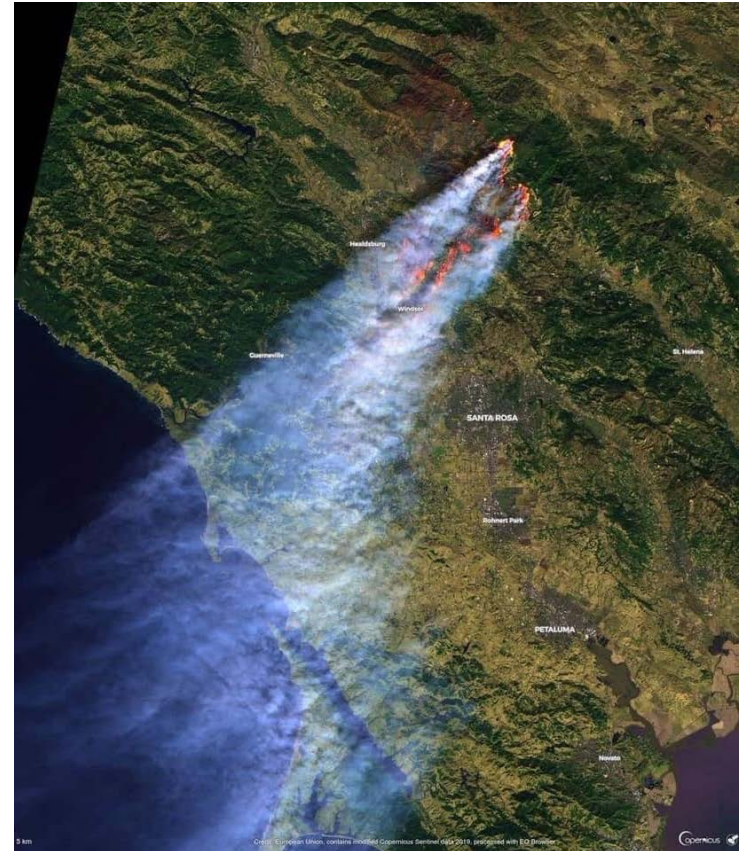
Recognition that the current County-wide fire service delivery structure, funding, and system structure is inadequate.

- Not meeting NFPA standards
- Residents are migratory- they travel through multiple jurisdictions to work, to recreate, to visit friends and family
- Interdependent system: Not all fire service agencies are equal but all fire service agencies are dependent upon one another.



We are only as strong as our most fragile link...

- The public needs and expects prompt, efficient and effective service everywhere
- We are all interdependent
- No single agency stands alone
- Our population is migratory



The Primary Goal

“More efficient, effective, and sustainable fire response, emergency alert, and wildfire capabilities that protect the health and safety of the public in Sonoma County”.



Source: Press Democrat



Background

County-wide fire service delivery structure and funding was inadequate for a variety of reasons.

- Professional Fire Chiefs, Firefighters researched and made recommendations on how to achieve overall goal in providing better service
- Board of Supervisors formed Ad Hoc
- Coordination and efforts began in 2014 with the 38 Fire Agencies in the County that investigated and determined county needs to meet overall goal
- Fire Services Advisory Council (FSAC) in April, 2016
- Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) in August, 2018
- Fire Services Working Group (FSWG) in March, 2019



Fire Service Working Group

Jason Boaz - Chief, Healdsburg, County Chiefs' Association President

Tony Gossner - Chief, Santa Rosa, Cities' Representative

Mark Heine - Chief, Sonoma County FPD, State Chiefs' Association

Steve Akre - Chief, Sonoma Valley, EMS Representative

Dave Franceschi - Chief, Forestville FPD, Region 5

Shana Jones - Unit Chief, Sonoma County, CAL FIRE

Dan George – Assistant Chief, Gold Ridge FPD, VFC Administrator

Mike Mickelson – Assistant Chief, Wilmar VFC, VFC Association

Joe Petersen - Director, Gold Ridge FPD, Fire Districts' Association

Tim Aboudara -President, Santa Rosa, Fire Fighters L1401



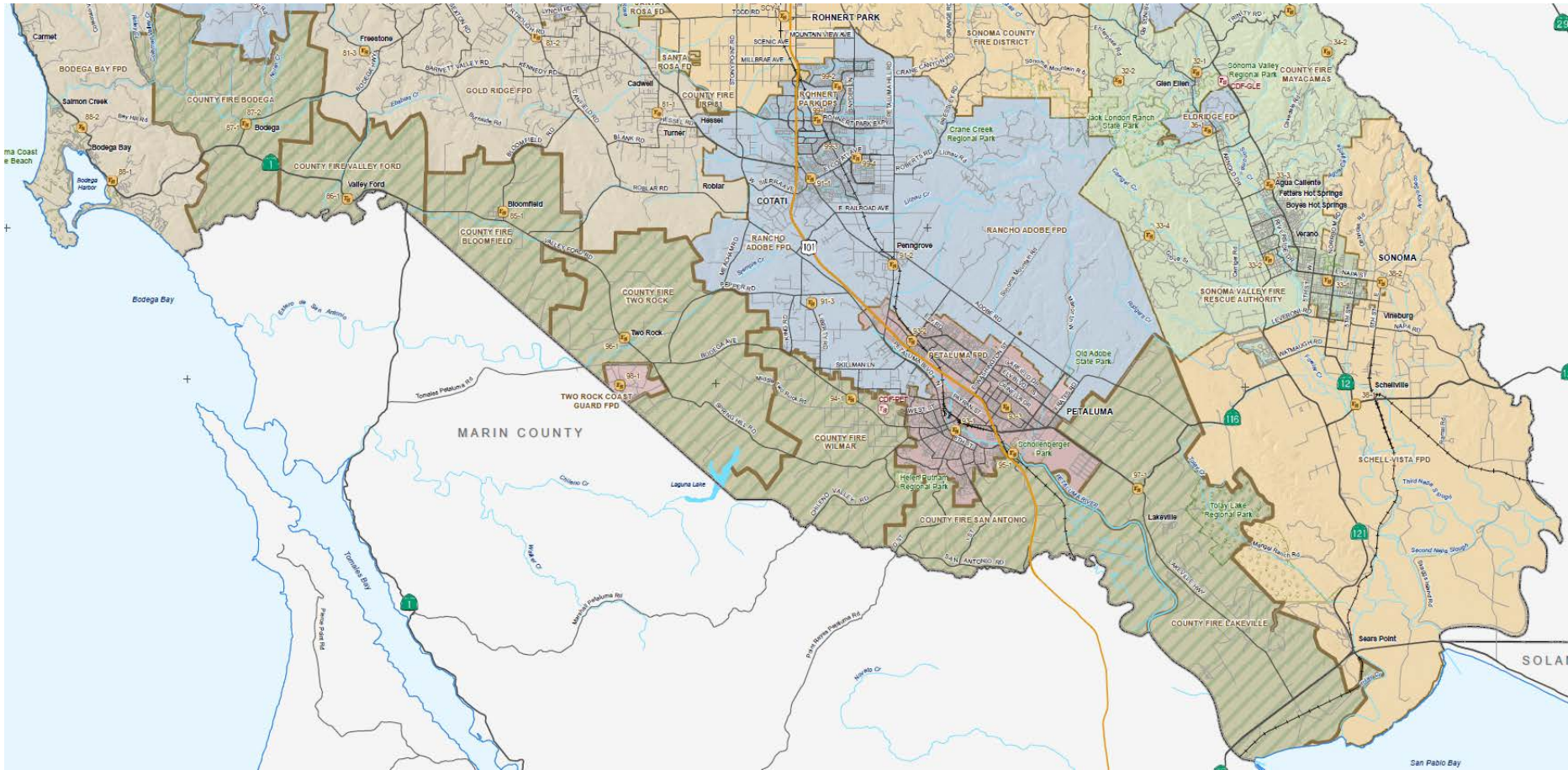
Fire Chief's Recommendations

A regional plan based on population density, call volumes, station coverage and special hazards to advance comprehensive long-term strategy covering all jurisdictions.

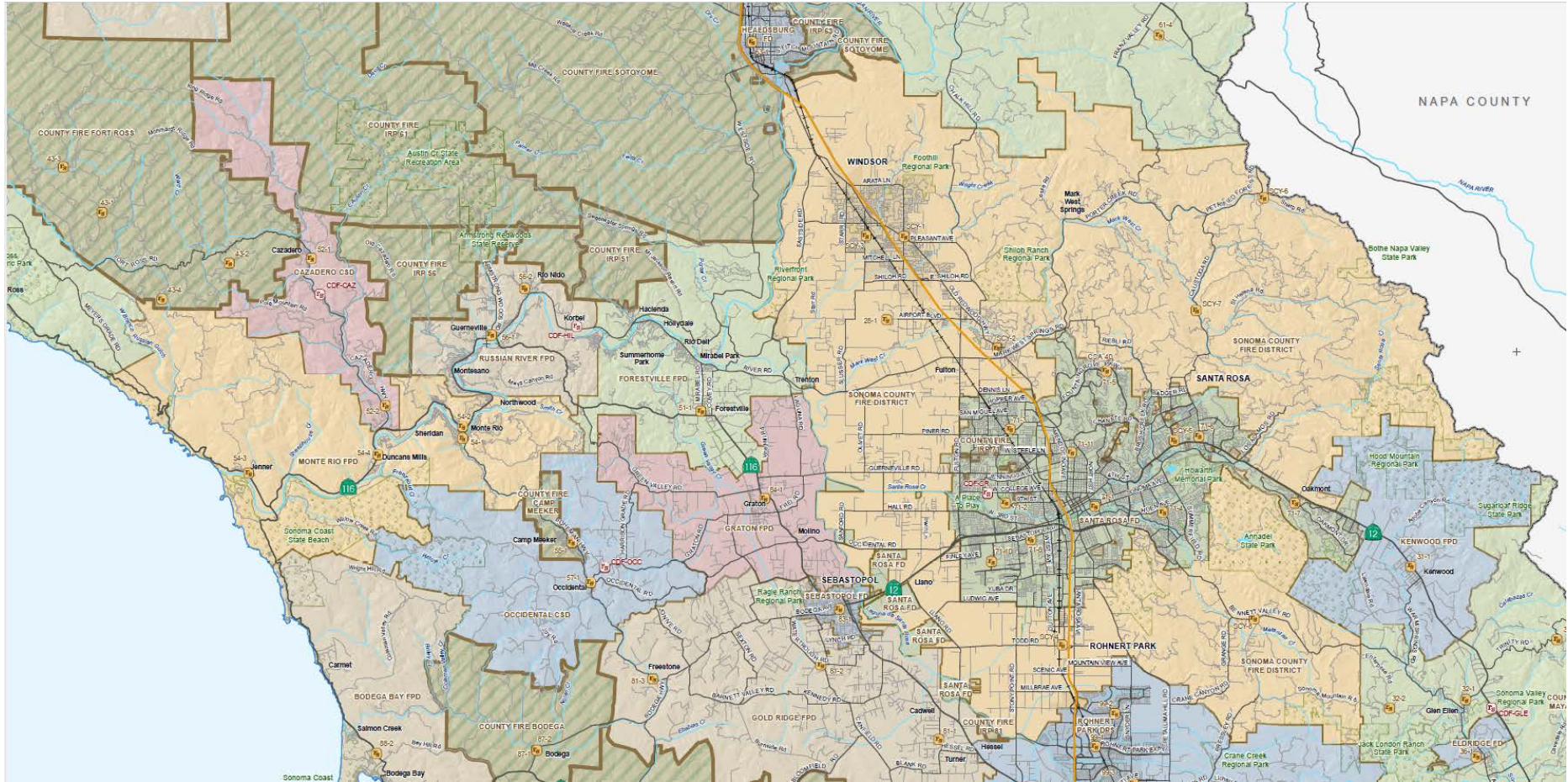
- Increase effective firefighting force available countywide using NFPA 1710/1720
 - Key goal of 3 firefighters per engine
- Elimination of response boundaries; eliminate strain of responding out-side existing boundaries
- Increasing the overall strength of the system
- Reduce dependence on larger fire agencies



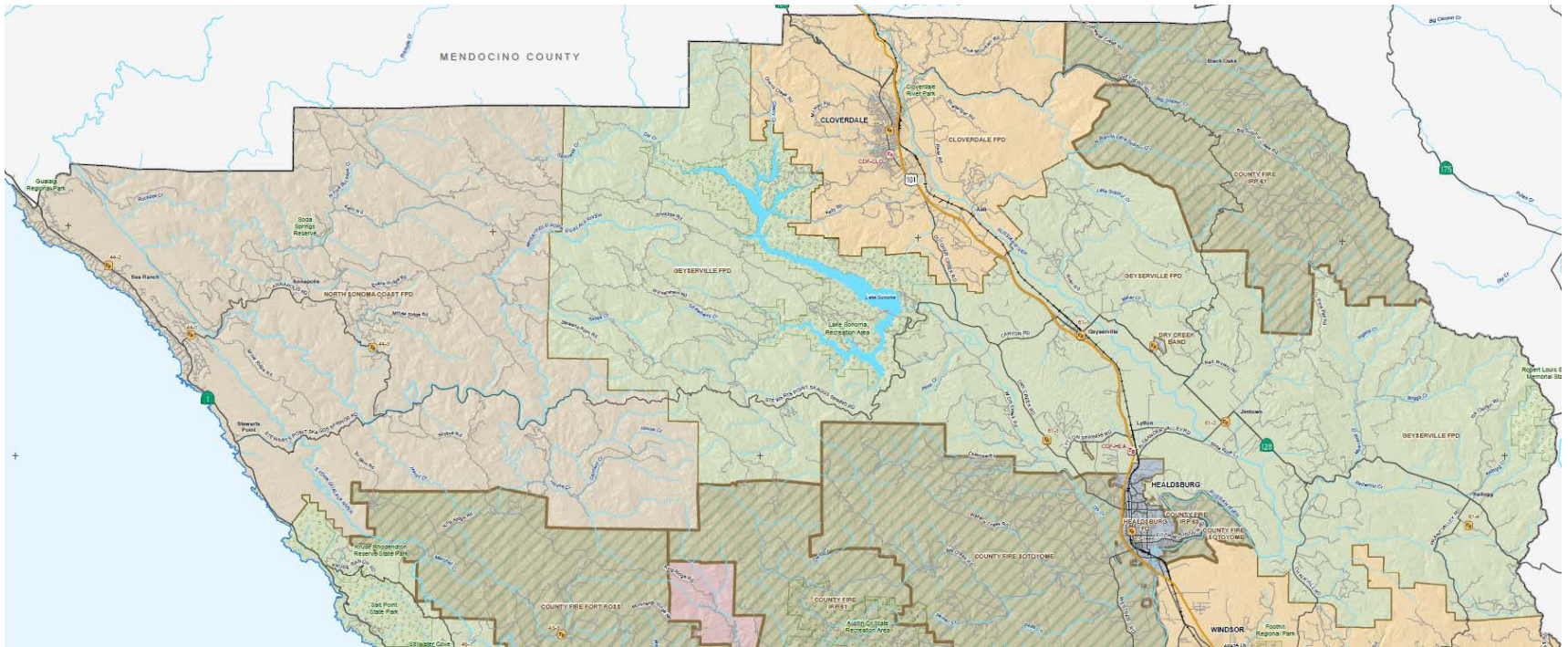
South County System of Coverage



Mid-County System of Coverage



North County System of Coverage



Need for More Firefighters

- More local firefighters are needed to enhance our preparedness and response capabilities.
- Staffing increases/augmentations planned in all fire regions in Sonoma County
 - 200+ full-time staff additions
 - Firefighters to facilitate alert and warning and evacuations
 - Personnel for vegetation management and fire prevention
 - Battalion Chiefs for regional command and control leadership



Vegetation Management, Wildfire Prevention & Preparedness

- Funding enables Fire agencies to provide vegetation management services
- Reduce fuel loads in rural and urban-wildland interfaces to prevent fires from entering cities with programs like:
 - Wood chipping program
 - Roadside clearance near private and public roads
 - Tree limbing and tree removal in targeted fire-prone areas
 - Other fuel load reduction programs to prevent future wildfires (controlled burns, etc.)



Emergency Alert & Warning Systems

Expand alerting capabilities with coordinated system

- Network of sirens on stations and apparatus, including hi-lo sirens
 - Expand community and neighborhood resiliency with door-to-door alerts, evacuations, and red flag pre-positioning
 - Enhance WEA, SoCo Alert, and Nixle
- Investment in future alerting technology systems



Region 7 Plan Highlights

- Staffing: 44 additions
 - 3 Battalion Chiefs
 - 2 Fire Prevention Officers
 - 39 Firefighters
- Facilities
 - 5 New Stations
 - 2 Moves



New Stations in Expenditure Plan

- **Santa Rosa**

- \$30 Million for 2 new stations and to move the Calistoga station

- Allowing additional financing options (bonding, grants etc.)



Other stations include:

- City of Healdsburg
- City of Rohnert Park
- City of Petaluma
- Geyserville FPD
- Sonoma County Fire (former Windsor)



Regional Consolidation

- Regional consolidation necessary to accomplish the goal of efficient, effective and sustainable fire services
- Cities with municipal firefighting services are exempted from the requirement but are free to join
- Funding provided as long as agencies pursue regional consolidation
- Board of Supervisors in partnership with LAFCo will conduct consolidation reviews every three years. Any reduction in funding requires a 4/5ths vote by the Board of Supervisors.



Reallocation

- Plan allows limited flexibility to reallocate funds among fire agencies as a result of changing conditions
- There are a variety of conditions that could trigger a reallocation recommendation
- Reallocations must first be recommended by the Sonoma County Chiefs Association before going to the Board of Supervisors for approval by unanimous vote



Polling Research Process

Quantitative Survey of Likely March 2020 Voters

Goals: Evaluate feasibility of a fire protection revenue measure at the ¼ cent or ½ cent level

*Hybrid web/telephone survey
627 interviews
MoE ±3.9 percentage points
July 9 - 14, 2019*

Qualitative Focus Groups among Likely Voters

Goals: Hear opinions regarding fire protection

*2 groups
August 21, 2019*

Quantitative Survey of Likely March 2020 Voters

Goals: Test support for a revised ½ cent fire protection revenue measure

*Hybrid web/telephone survey
644 interviews
MoE ±3.9 percentage points
September 25 – 29, 2019*

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.



Polling Key Findings

Polling and focus groups conducted in July, August, and September

Prior to the Kincade Fire

- 2017 wildfires are still a very recent memory and voters are concerned that it could easily happen again.
- Sonoma County voters think local firefighters are doing a good job and are supportive of making sure they have the resources they need.
- There is significant interest in improved emergency systems.

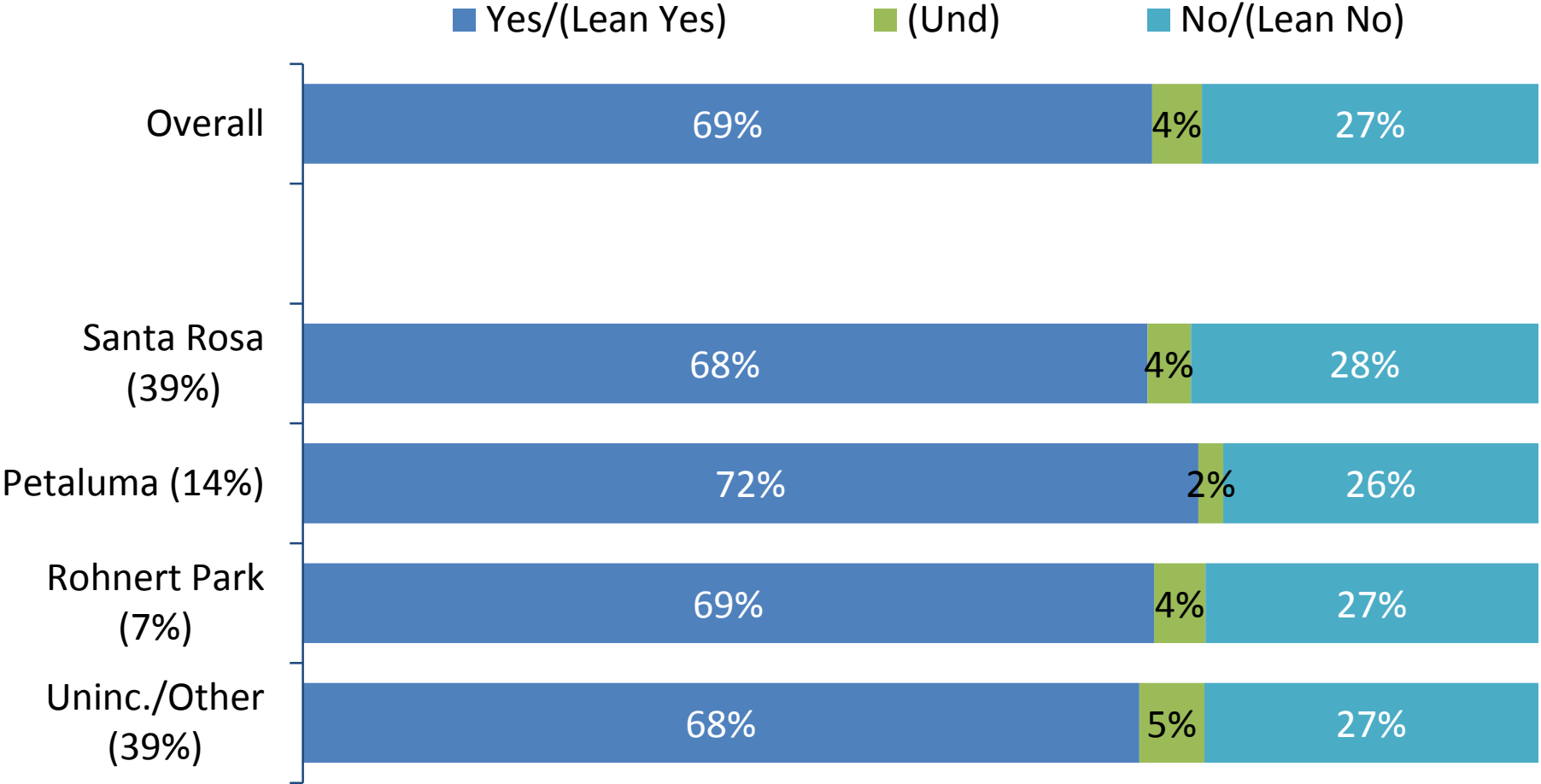


Polling Key Findings

- Concerns about fire protection and disaster preparedness are greater than concerns about climate, environment, traffic, growth, development, government, taxes, or crime
- Only housing, homelessness and infrastructure are of more concern to voters



Second Poll –Voted By City



Approved Ordinance

In November, 2019 the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to place the Wildfire Prevention, Emergency Alert and Response Measure and associated implementation plan on the March, 2020 ballot for a 1/2-cent sales tax until repealed by voters.



Questions/Discussion

