

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: NANCY GORNOWICZ, HOUSING MANAGER  
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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
SUBJECT: SONOMA COUNTY'S BUILDING HOMES: A POLICY MAKER'S  
TOOLBOX FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

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RECOMMENDATION

Informational only.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The County of Sonoma has developed *Building Homes: A Policy Maker's Toolbox for Ending Homelessness*, (the "*Toolbox*") which offers a countywide, collaborative strategy for ending homelessness in Sonoma County in 10 years by providing services coupled with building 2,000 new housing units and repurposing 200 units in existing structures for homeless individuals and families.

The tools in the *Toolbox* overlap considerably with the strategies that the City of Santa Rosa's has used or is considering to increase the supply of a full spectrum of housing that ranges from affordable housing for extremely low income households – that could house homeless people and others earning less than 30% of the area median income – to incentivizing higher density market rate housing.

BACKGROUND

A shortage of housing of all types is a countywide issue caused by a supply and demand imbalance, market conditions that do not support new housing, high prices and stagnant wages.

The City Council has been studying the local housing market and has begun to look at ways to increase the supply of new affordable and market rate housing in Santa Rosa. The Council has also recently increased its support to Catholic Charities Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) program, which works to engage unsheltered people,

lead them into services and, ultimately, provide housing as part of the “Housing First” model. The shortage of available housing is an obstacle.

### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

July 21, 2015 – City Council adopted a work program including the two study sessions in consideration of affordable housing.

October 20, 2015 – City Council conducted Affordable Housing Study Session #1, at which it received an overview of the housing market, the existing housing authority inventory, existing housing programs and funding sources, and an estimate of the cost of an affordable housing program from 2015-2023.

November 10, 2015 – City Council conducted Affordable Housing Study Session #2, at which it discussed moving forward with a housing policy that includes several broad components: (A) shifting housing production toward high density development and infill sites; (B) incentivizing market rate housing production; (C) increasing private-sector production of affordable housing; and (D) increasing City investment and participation in housing production.

### ANALYSIS

Housing for all Santa Rosans is a high priority for the City Council. Currently, there are approximately 4,095 affordable housing units in the city, the third highest in the Bay Area, while Santa Rosa’s population is the fifth largest in the Bay Area. The Council has expressed interest in increasing the supply of the full range affordable housing and incentivizing construction of new higher-density, market rate housing.

As stated in the *Toolbox*, there is a growing body of research that supports the conclusion that, despite the high initial costs, providing housing and supportive services to homeless people results in significant savings in other public spending areas, particularly in health, law enforcement and criminal justice.

Although the *Toolbox* focuses on housing for homeless people, which is a part of the housing issue, it may be a springboard for collaboration among the County and nine cities to think regionally about the common housing issues throughout the county.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Holding a Study Session does not have a fiscal impact

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

## BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

## NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – *Building Homes: A Policy Maker's Toolbox for Ending Homelessness*

## CONTACT

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