

**Policy Platform of the Community Coalition**  
**on the Sonoma County General Plan update**  
**8/29/07**

The Sonoma County General Plan has been under review since 2001. After review by the Citizen's Advisory Committee from 2001 to 2005, the Planning Commission reviewed the draft General Plan during 2006 and 2007. While the Citizen's Advisory Committee draft did address some of the emerging environmental issues that were identified in 2001 as in need of attention, the landscape – physical and political – has changed considerably since the beginning of the GPU process. With this second round of review, many policies to protect our quality of life have been stripped from the Draft General Plan. These actions threaten the future of Sonoma County, and must be reversed and improved in order to avoid significant long-term losses to our livelihoods and way of life.

In order to address these problems, the below policies are proposed for adoption into the updated General Plan. Though the process has been going on for some time now, these additions are necessary both to recognize the changed environmental and social realities in Sonoma County, and as mitigations to impacts identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Report. As a self-mitigating document, the final General Plan legally must address, and should mitigate, the significant impacts created by policies in the Plan.

**1) In 2005, the Supervisors unanimously adopted a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2015. In order to reach this goal, emission reduction and energy planning must be made a fundamental part of the General Plan.**

- a. Create, implement and regularly monitor a comprehensive **county energy plan**, including both internal county operations and the private sector.
  - The energy plan will address greenhouse gas targets approved by the supervisors and bring county policies into compliance with **AB32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act**.
  - Allow **no net increase** in power-intensive sectors such as water use, wastewater processing and solid waste taken out of county.
- b. Create a county **Energy Department** to develop, coordinate and facilitate county-wide energy planning, public education on energy issues, energy conservation and efficiency programs, and greenhouse gas reduction actions.
- c. Create an ongoing **task force** to evaluate and propose comprehensive policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Sonoma County.
- d. As more than 50% of greenhouse gases in Sonoma County are released by **transportation**, meeting the emissions reduction goal will require that the General Plan address encouraging the use of **low-emission vehicles** as well as **reduction of car usage** and the underlying land use patterns that contribute to it:
  - Maintain/improve policies on **transit ridership** to provide opportunities for getting people around the County without using their cars.

- In addition to directing growth into existing cities and towns, strengthen urban design standards for unincorporated communities that will emphasize transit use and create **walkable/bikeable communities**.
- Collect baseline **Vehicle Miles Traveled** (VMT) data, and use reduced VMT as a metric for land use policies, and development approvals.

**2) Water is a finite, shared, public trust resource essential to all life. Ineffective water resource management leads to adverse impacts such as flooding, polluted water sources, unreliable water supplies, dry wells, de-watered creeks and loss of fisheries. In Sonoma County, development patterns and environmental change are exacerbating these already grave issues. There is clear popular demand for better management of our water resources to ensure a supply of clean drinking water for the future, adequate treatment of wastewater and productive habitat for aquatic life.**

- a. Strengthen policies on **groundwater monitoring**, and create a **groundwater management plan** with timelines.
- b. Improve policy language on **package treatment plants** to ensure that they are only permitted where consistent with the General Plan, and necessary to resolve an existing public health hazard.
  - Permit **package treatment plants** only when they are consistent with the General Plan and when needed to alleviate an existing public health hazard; establish operating procedures, treatment standards and monitoring programs for all plants; require that any package treatment plant discharging more than 1,200 gallons of wastewater per day, or any plant in a State identified groundwater recharge area, treat water to levels suitable for human consumption; require that bonds be posted or sinking funds established to provide for repair, removal or replacement of package treatment plants reaching the end of their intended service life.
- c. Require that new development shall create **no net increase in water usage or wastewater discharge**, through the use of water-use reduction technologies, innovative design, and in-lieu fees for county water conservation programs.
- d. Riparian zones with healthy native vegetation must be protected and re-established within the county. All perennial and intermittent streams must have **adequate riparian corridors in which uses are restricted and native vegetation is encouraged**.
- e. Establish **Basin Advisory Committees for each watershed**, in which there can be a public process for discussing and finding solutions to water problems in each region and reaching agreement on county-wide policies.
- f. Permit use of **recycled wastewater** for irrigation only when all wastewater discharge requirements are met. Establish a Citizen's Advisory Committee to conduct an ongoing review of wastewater issues, with particular emphasis on emerging and unregulated contaminants, and to present a public report on these issues at least once every five years.

**3) While Sonoma County voters overwhelmingly approved Measure F in November 2006, endorsing the concept of protection of open space, agricultural land, wildlife habitat and water resources, policies are also needed to ensure that these goals will be achieved in the future. The County General Plan 2020 policies are not yet strong enough to protect valuable unincorporated lands from development pressures.**

- a. Set a deadline to adopt guiding language for expansion of **Community Separators**.
  - Create new Community Separators for Cloverdale, Sonoma, and other communities in accordance with Staff Option 3 from the Citizen's Advisory Committee.
  - Strengthen language to ensure implementation of OSRC Program 6 to guarantee community process to identify new areas for Community Separators expansion.
  
- b. Limit development of **public and quasi-public institutions to within Urban Service Areas**, and to areas that are accessible by walking and biking by the primary population served.
  
- c. Strengthen rules for new **agricultural processing facilities** to guarantee that new development on agricultural lands is tightly linked to local production. This will reduce transportation costs, and preserve farmland for agriculture into the future.
  - Adopt the **75% rule** for new processing facilities.
  - Allow for **on-farms sales** of farm-produced products by small farms.
  
- d. Institute policies to mitigate the **loss of farmlands**.
  - Restore and improve language on Transfer of Development Rights program, and draft language for 2:1 mitigation ratio.
  
- e. Establish a baseline for the major habitat types (plant communities) and a monitoring program to record the status of each over time. This program will be the first step in stopping and reversing the trend of **cumulative habitat degradation** and loss in Sonoma County.
  - Convene a committee of experts in 2007 to begin developing these baselines.
  - Seek outside **funding for mapping** needed to fill in the gaps in existing information on habitat types throughout the county.