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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SONOMA COUNTY HOUSING ELEMENT TECHNICAL REPORT (PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT)

Prepared for:

Permit and Resources Management Department
County of Sonoma, California

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INTRODUCTION

The Draft Sonoma County Housing Element Technical Report (Report) was published October 25, 2007 and made available for public review. Public comments have been received and are being addressed in the final version of the Report. The purpose of the Report is to lay the groundwork for public evaluation of Sonoma County's (County) housing production efforts by providing a rich source of demographic and housing-related data specific to the unincorporated regions of the County, when available and countywide when necessary or more relevant. The Sonoma County Permit and Resources Management Division (PRMD) contracted with Economic and Planning Systems, Inc., (EPS) to prepare the Report using data from the most accurate sources available.

The Report includes the following information:

- Analysis of existing housing needs using demographic, economic and housing permit data;
- Description of the affordable housing programs administered by the County and an inventory of income-targeted housing units;
- Analysis of the County's special needs populations as required by State Housing Element law; and
- Projected housing needs for unincorporated County as calculated by Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) in accordance with the State Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process.

Data referenced in this Executive Summary and the sources thereof can be found in the full Report.

FINDINGS

DECREASED HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

As **Table 1** illustrates, during the first half of this decade, countywide median income remained flat while housing prices increased dramatically. This gap between income and housing has important implications for the County's housing stock.

Table 1
Sonoma County Housing Element Report Executive Summary
Countywide Income and Housing Price (2006\$)

Item	2000	2006	% Growth 00'-06'
Median Household Income [1]	\$62,138	\$60,821	-2.12%
Median Sales Price [2]			
Single-Family Homes	\$357,073	\$580,000	62%
Condominiums and Townhomes	\$191,268	\$363,000	90%
Attainable Sales Price at Median Income [3]	\$244,900	\$239,900	-2.04%

"income_price"

[1] Source: Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2006. Adjusted by CPI
 Census figures differ from HCD-established County medians.

[2] Source: 2007 rereport.com (Multiple Listing Service). Adjusted by CPI.

[3] EPS Calculation assuming 5% down payment, 6.5% interest, 30-year mortgage,
 no homeowners' association dues, and 35% of gross income for housing costs.

Not surprisingly, the percentage of households countywide considered to be burdened by their housing costs increased to where 30 percent of all renters and 20 percent of all homeowners countywide were paying 50 percent or more of their income on housing costs in 2006. The cost burden is felt most acutely by lower income households.

In the unincorporated County, the incidences of overcrowding increased among renters and homeowners from 1990 to 2000. Housing units with more than 1.5 persons per room are considered "severely overcrowded." Incidences of severe overcrowding increased by 41 percent among homeowners and 32 percent among renters.

SIGNIFICANT PRODUCTION OF AFFORDABLE UNITS

During the last Housing Element planning period, the County adopted progressive land use ordinances designed to encourage the development of affordable housing and accessed available subsidy resources. As a result of this emphasis on workforce housing, the County produced a significant number of affordable units. **Table 2** shows that a substantial percentage of the units receiving permits during the period of the previous Housing Element Update, were considered affordable.

Historic permit data also show that multifamily units are making up a higher percentage of the overall total of new housing units in this decade than they did in the 1990's. Multifamily dwellings are typically more affordable than single family dwellings.

Table 2
Sonoma County Housing Element Report Executive Summary
Affordable Units Produced During Previous Period [1]

Affordability Level	Unit Production 1999 - 2006	Proportion
Very Low Income	650	20%
Low Income	350	11%
Moderate Income	332	10%
Total Affordable Units	1,332	42%
Above Moderate	1,867	58%
Total Units	3,199	100%

"affordable"

Source: PRMD

[1] Unincorporated County only.

In addition, the number of beds available for farmworkers through employee-sponsored units increased from 456 in 1999 to 883 in 2007. Housing for farmworkers is, however, still considered a significant need for the County.

HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION

The Report discusses the need for housing for special populations, as required by State law, including farmworkers, the elderly, the disabled, large families, single-parent families, and homeless people. The following are examples of findings regarding the County's special needs populations:

- Disabled people are nearly twice as likely to live below the poverty level as the population as a whole.
- Single-parent families are far more likely to be renters than families as a whole.
- Information gathered by the Sonoma County Continuum of Care Planning Group points to the significant percentage of homeless individuals who are also mentally ill or disabled.

PROJECTED HOUSING NEED/RHNA IS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER FOR THIS UPDATE

ABAG used a transit-weighted methodology for distributing the region’s share of housing units for the current Housing Element Update planning period and the result is a lower projected housing need for unincorporated County. **Table 3** displays the RHNA unit requirements for the previous period and the current period.

**Table 3
 Sonoma County Housing Element Report Executive Summary
 Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)**

Affordability Level	Required Unit Capacity	
	1999-2006	2007-2014
Very Low Income	1,311	319
Low Income	1,116	217
Moderate Income	1,563	264
Total Affordable Units	3,990	800
Above Moderate	2,809	564
Total Units	6,799	1,364