



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION DRIVE – ROOM 104A
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95403-2888
TELEPHONE (707) 565-2431
FAX (707) 565-3778

BOB DEIS
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JIM ANDERSEN
ASST. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JENNIFER M. MURRAY
DEP. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
CHRIS THOMAS
DEP. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jim Andersen
707-565-2431

County Government Seeks Public Input on Plans for Challenging Future

Santa Rosa, CA, August 7, 2007: The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors today adopted a Draft of the County's first Strategic Plan, and launched a county-wide series of meetings to solicit public comment on the Draft Plan. "This Draft Strategic Plan represents a major effort to guide the County in responding to critical trends," said Supervisor Mike Reilly, co-chair with Supervisor Tim Smith of the Board's Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Steering Committee. "It addresses the fact that Sonoma County is changing, and County government needs to change as well."

To ensure that the public and all interested parties have the opportunity to understand the potential impact of those changes, and contribute input to the County's response, the Board of Supervisors will conduct a series of five community meetings. Supervisor Smith noted that "The Draft Plan recognizes the need for the County to further engage the public in our work, and these meetings are an opportunity to begin that effort." Community meetings will be held at the following times and locations:

Sebastopol, 9/20, 7:00-9:00, Sebastopol Veterans Memorial Hall, 282 High St.
Sonoma, 9/25, 7:00-9:00, The Sonoma Community Center, 276 East Napa St.
Petaluma, 9/27, 7:00-9:00, Petaluma Veterans Memorial Hall, 1094 Petaluma Blvd. South
Santa Rosa, TBA
Healdsburg, TBA

The County Strategic Plan addresses the fact that, for roughly the past decade, the increasing costs of providing County services have exceeded the growth in revenues. Key services include law enforcement, housing of adults and juveniles who are awaiting trial or have been sentenced, supervision of those on probation, public and mental health services, adult and child protective services, land use planning and assistance, and recreational opportunities. The County has had to defer investment in critical infrastructure, such as roads and facilities. The Draft Plan also

considers the County's changing population, and the opportunities and challenges that result from a new mix of community members

Additional Strategic Challenges

In addition to the fiscal challenge, the Strategic Plan addresses four other major strategic opportunities or challenges:

1. Continued growth in the Latino population (especially youth) and senior population, increasing economic pressure on low and middle-income families, increased gang activity, continuing high substance abuse problems, and unacceptably high drop-out rates will become significant drivers of decisions.
2. County government has a large number of facilities that are not adequate because they are nearing the end of their useful life or capacity, or, could be more strategically located; this is particularly true of detention facilities.
3. Other critical infrastructure, most notably roads and bridges, have long ago reached a point where the cost to maintain and replace the assets exceeds revenues.
4. Actions by the federal government, state government, cities, tribes, districts, and other public agencies are not always well coordinated and can work at cross purposes with the needs of the County.

Draft Goals

The Draft Strategic Plan outlines goals to address the challenges:

- I. Make the most efficient and effective use of current resources.
- II. Enhance the County's fiscal soundness through the expansion and increased diversification of General Fund and other revenue sources.
- III. Enhance the capacity of County programs and community systems to more effectively meet the changing needs of individuals, families and communities in Sonoma County.
- IV. Manage Sonoma County's facilities and real estate assets at their highest and best use.
- V. Proactively address:
 - Unmet needs in the County's waste management and water and wastewater treatment infrastructure, and
 - Failing transportation infrastructure so that it can be maintained and operated to provide safe, reliable and accessible movement of people and goods throughout the county.
- VI. Engage with the public and other jurisdictions to mutually define and build support for policies that benefit the entire community.

County Administrator Bob Deis stated, “The trends and goals outlined in the Draft Plan will require the County to make some hard choices over the next five-plus years. We look forward to receiving input from the community about the priorities for County services.”

Additional information on the County’s Draft Strategic Plan can be found at www.sonoma-county.org/strategic/.

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