

County of Sonoma



Strategic Planning

*Work Group Four:  
Jurisdictional Roles*

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The Results Group



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## Section 1: Work Group Purpose and Methodology

### Purpose:

The County of Sonoma (hereafter referred to as the County) is in the second phase of its strategic planning project: the Analysis Phase. During the first phase (Readiness), the Board of Supervisors identified the major strategic issues the County needs to address in its strategic plan, and established four Work Groups to gather and analyze information to more fully understand these strategic issues. Each Work Group was charged with gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to develop a deeper understanding of the strategic issues. This information will be used in the next phase (Planning), where goals, objectives and strategies will be developed to address each of these issues.

Work Group Four was given the responsibility of conducting research on the following issue:

*What is the role of county vis a vis other governmental bodies and how do we best address the trends of:*

- *City, state and federal agencies taking a more active role in local service delivery systems or policy decisions, or*
- Reducing federal and state program support, leaving gaps in local services.

### Methodology:

The work group began its data collection effort by interviewing all Sonoma County Department Heads and summarizing the data into four functional Work Group summaries (Development, Administration, Criminal Justice, and Health and Human Services). The Work Group also conducted interviews with officials from five of Sonoma County's nine cities (including three City Managers). In addition, Work Group members conducted a literature search and interviews with a number of professional associations, key managers in other County and city governments, and private sector enterprises. Finally, the Work Group collected data from County departments about legislatively mandated tasks, asking which of those tasks were completed using funds outside of County revenue sources and whether those funds were restricted. The following conclusions, and supporting statements are a result of Work Group members' analysis of all collected data.

### **Work Group Members:**

Gary Helfrich	PRMD
Gino Giannavola	Health Services
Nick Honey	Human Services, Family Youth etc
Vern Losh	Emergency Services
Pam Johnston	Auditor/Controller
Steve Sharpe	CAO/LAFCO
Michael Thompson	Water Agency
Suzanne Wilford	Sonoma County Transportation Agency
Dave Edmonds	Sheriff

### **Resources**

Greg Dion	County Counsel	
John Abrahams	Public defender	Steering Committee Liaison
Greg Carr	PRMD	Steering Committee Liaison
Steve Thomas	The Results Group	Consultant



## Section 2: Summary of Major Findings and Conclusions

Through research, analysis, and deliberation, Work Group Four identified the following “major findings and conclusions” as the most significant to the County of Sonoma over the strategic planning horizon of five to seven years. Each of these is explored further in Section 3: *Discussion of Findings and Conclusions*. In addition, several appendices are attached which provide supporting data and information.

**Finding 1. State and federal governments will continue to pursue policies and legislation with insufficient regard to impacts at the local level. Sonoma County’s ability to shape its future depends in large part on its ability to positively influence the policies and actions of key partner agencies (Federal, State, Regional, Tribal, City and special districts.)**

One of the key questions the Board of Supervisors charged the Work Group to examine was how changes in federal and state funding might impact the County’s ability to deliver local services. The Work Group found:

- a) Increasing pressure at the federal level to limit entitlements. For example, changes in medical eligibility will result in increased demand for County-funded services.
- b) Categorical funding has become more prescriptive. For example, funds used for Inter-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 now require a multi-jurisdiction plan before disbursement. New federal homeless policies mandate regional housing plans be developed as part of funding requirements.
- c) Increasing shifts in the burden of responsibility for services from the federal government to the state and county level, and
- d) The state’s continuing budgetary crisis has led to both a loss of funding and increased regulations and requirements about how funding can be allocated. This has resulted in the County’s ability to deliver services being increasingly constrained and prescribed, i.e., both the federal and state governments are using funding resource streams to implement more global strategic policies, and directing and restricting funding to achieve their respective goals and objectives.

In many cases this leads to incompatible and or conflicting requirements from federal, state, and regional entities, and does not take into account service needs at the local level. While passage of Proposition 1A in 2004 has been extremely effective in assuring that locally collected tax dollars remain local for local use, there have been increasing strains in the relationships between County departments and their respective state counterparts as to who should be responsible for funding various local services. Some examples include: Cal Trans reducing its commitment to maintaining roads within the County, and the state capping the number of authorized employees at regional water agencies even though they have a need, and in some cases, funds to support a larger organizational capacity.

An example of the difficulty in complying with conflicting policies/requirements between agencies is found with the Army Corps of Engineers Readiness Division requiring there be no trees fronting levees and waterways. The regulatory division of this same agency, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, prohibits the removal of trees from these same levees and waterways. In addition, the State of California Fish and Game, and Federal Fish and Wildlife permitting processes overlap, yet each set of requirements has to be met.

Furthermore, the failure of the state to adequately fund programs the County is required to provide very often shifts indirect costs to the County. For example, the failure of the state to build adequate capacity in its mental health system forces the County to house individuals locally who are required to

be moved to hospitals (which are increasingly unavailable due to capacity issues). (For more examples, see p. 5: Section 3A: *State, Federal and Regional Issues*. For more detail on federal and state mandates, see Appendix A.)

**Finding 2. Developing trust and positive working relationships between County and federal, state and regional personnel, including elected officials, and community partner organizations, is likely to become more difficult, making it harder for the County to navigate an increasingly complex fiscal, policy and service-delivery landscape.**

Competing priorities and ill-defined roles, responsibilities and authorities have led to jurisdictional conflict at a time when funding sources have become increasingly less stable. In addition to the problems identified in Finding 1., cooperative relationships between County officials and their federal, state, and regional entities counterparts continue to degenerate as a result of retirements (i.e., the baby boom cohort), “terming-out” of legislative positions, and key personnel being lured away by the private sector and other local government agencies. This has resulted in a loss of institutional knowledge, project history and background, and trusting relationships. Historically, these key relationships have been critical in helping the County and other governmental agencies meet their respective goals and objectives, see projects through to completion, facilitate processes that serve all partners and efficiently deliver services and products. Replacement personnel may not have the experience, the level of trust, or the benefit of understanding how these relationships evolved over time and what shaped and influenced them.

For example, state legislative term limits have resulted in the loss of current advocates or champions in the legislature for local services such as mental health or alcohol and drug programs. This loss of a knowledge and experience base removes consistency, forcing the professionals and experts in a range of policy and program areas to re-educate the legislature in the areas of building knowledge and trust as well as in finding “champions” who know the field and are committed to providing sustained advocacy and leadership. The County lacks both a dedicated strategy and resources for building and maintaining these relationships over a sustained period of time.

**Finding 3. The proliferation of initiatives, propositions and the formation of special districts will continue as residents seek direct avenues to solutions and/or more local control to meet their interests.**

One significant impact of Finding 1 is increased public confusion about “who in government is responsible for what”. Combined with increasing public dissatisfaction with “legislative gridlock” in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. (partially as an outgrowth of the problems outlined in Finding 2), this dissatisfaction has led to increasing perceptions that government is non-responsive to local needs. Some of the blame is focused on County government. Nevertheless, one result is a tremendous increase in initiative-based legislation addressing focused issues, a proliferation of ballot measures, and formation of special districts designed to serve specific, very vocal, constituencies.<sup>1</sup> While in some cases, these initiatives have resulted in targeted funding for important local needs (e.g., Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act), in many cases, poorly written ballot language and accompanying documents have resulted in significant implementation problems at the local level. Proposition 90, currently on the November 7 ballot, would vastly curtail eminent domain and the ability of local governments to change zoning designations. It would also upgrade the threshold of compensation and clearly signal some displeasure by constituents relative to what some perceive as an excess of government power.

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<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of 2001, 90 local measures have been on the ballot in Sonoma County (though not all involved revenue generation), and 11 new Special Districts have been formed (current total: 88, not including schools).

**Finding 4. Lack of effective cooperation with cities and other local jurisdictions on resolution of infrastructure and service issues will lead to increasing conflict over intergovernmental coordination and funding.**

Cities view the County as generally very open about sharing information and demonstrating a willingness to work together with cities on areas of mutual interest. However, the current relationship between cities and the County is best described as conflicted, i.e., characterized by examples of both effective collaboration and frustrating lack of consensus and coordination. On one hand, at all levels, many strong working relationships exist between County and local government elected officials and staff. These relationships have led to a number of successful collaborative efforts, e.g., the County-wide REDCOM dispatch and communications project, Geysers wastewater project and numerous road development and maintenance projects (For more detail, see Section 2C: *Regional Issues*). Nevertheless, at both the policy and programmatic level, the cities perceive the County to be overly bureaucratic and too sensitive to vocal interest groups and critics. The belief is that insufficient focus is placed on developing long-term strategies meant to reduce more complex and significant delays in addressing pressing problems.

There are five “complex issues” where local municipalities want greater control: water resources, transportation, land use policies, solid waste, and maximizing resources. Other issues they are glad to leave to the County to address. (For greater detail on the five city-County issues, go to Section 2B: *Cities Issues*)

Finally, given growing fiscal pressures both cities and counties will likely face over the next 5-7 years (see above, Finding 1, and Work Group Report 1, Finding X), there is increasing urgency to find a more comprehensive resolution to the aforementioned complex issues of concern. In addition, it is not only the public at large who appear to lack a full understanding of the services the County provides to all residents. A lack of awareness among some local jurisdiction representatives about the interdependencies of their activities with certain County departments is cause for concern. In particular, there was no mention or acknowledgment of County-provided health and human services in the Work Group’s interviews with city officials.

**Finding 5. The community at large has a lack of awareness of the responsibilities and value of services provided by County departments and other jurisdictions.**

In a recent poll, 54% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, while 16% indicated they were dissatisfied. The telling statistic is that 30% responded that they “don’t know”. As noted earlier, many citizens cannot distinguish between what services the County provides, and what services are provided by local municipal governments, special districts and even the state. The average citizen sees all of them as part of the same bureaucracy, and unless they have a particular need that requires interaction with a County or city department, have a very limited understanding of the services available to or value provided them.

Left unaddressed, and given the pressures described in Findings 1-4, this lack of public understanding could significantly constrain the County’s ability to positively engage the public in addressing and resolving the important and complex issues outlined in Finding 4, and later in this report. On the other hand, a major opportunity for the County is to mobilize strong public interest in governmental affairs. Sonoma County has one of the highest levels of voter participation in the State,

e.g., in the 2004 election, 89.37% of the County's registered voters cast their ballots, the second highest total in the State.<sup>2</sup>

However, as noted in Finding 4, the County faces the challenge of finding solutions to issues of broad concern in an environment where many in the public often focus on the most narrow set of interests in trying to deal with the overwhelming complexity and proliferation of issues and jurisdictions. In the next five years, without a broader and deeper public understanding of County services and responsibilities, and how they intersect with other jurisdictions, local policy and programmatic "gridlock" could increasingly become the norm.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.calvoter.org/issues/votereng/votpart/images/stats\\_by\\_county1.jpg](http://www.calvoter.org/issues/votereng/votpart/images/stats_by_county1.jpg)



## Section 3: Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

### ***Current Conditions***

The County of Sonoma oversees the efforts of 27 departments, all of whom have some official relationship with other governmental bodies, including, federal, state, regional, other counties, local municipal governments, tribes, and special districts. While some of these relationships are governed by legislative mandates, the majority are not, having grown out of a shared responsibility to provide services and infrastructure for the residents of the County. Each of these governmental agencies coordinates the efforts of multiple departments (numbering in the hundreds), regulating or providing services to County residents. With overlapping mission statements, disparate interests, and finite funding sources, the landscape has become very complex and at the same time, very inter-dependent. Competing priorities and ill-defined roles, responsibilities, and authorities have led to jurisdictional conflict at a time when funding sources have become increasingly less stable.

In a 2006 poll conducted by J.Moore Methods, 54% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with their County Board of Supervisors, while 16% indicated they were dissatisfied. The telling statistic is that 30% of the respondents indicated they “don’t know”. It is the opinion of numerous County department heads that many citizens cannot distinguish which services the County provides, and which services the local municipal governments, special districts, and even the state provides. The average citizen sees all of them as part of the same bureaucracy, and unless those citizens have a particular need, requiring interaction with a county or city department, have a very limited understanding of the services available to or value provided them. This condition exacerbates increasing tensions within and between different jurisdictions and levels of government as described in more detail below.

### **A. State- Federal-Tribal Issues**

The most consistent and prevalent message we heard from our interviews both within and outside the County was the impact of the loss of funding from federal, state, and regional entities coupled with greater regulation and funding restrictions. Specific examples include:

- Increased pressure at the federal level to cap entitlements,
- The federal government shifting the burden of responsibility for services to the state and county level, and
- The state’s continuing budgetary crisis.

The factors mentioned above have resulted in increased constraints on the funding for and availability of services, as well as the means of service delivery being significantly prescribed. Both the federal and state governments are using funding resource streams to implement more global strategic policies, directing and restricting funding to achieve their respective goals and objectives. In many cases this leads to incompatible and or conflicting requirements from federal, state, and regional entities, and does not take into account the specific local conditions and service needs. Changes in state and federal regulations also demand increased flexibility and creativity in responding to this more regulated environment. The County finds itself constrained as it tries to respond to new regulations and mandates with human resources that are suddenly not adequate, classified or available for the new directives or programs.

In recent years the state has attempted to divert resources from local government into state coffers. Prop 1A, passed in 2004, has been extremely effective in assuring that locally collected tax dollars remain local. The state has not been able to find a way around the proposition’s unfunded mandate provisions, despite great effort in this area. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a new and persistent dynamic, continued stress on an already strained relationship between the state and counties.

Dialogue designed to reach agreement about who is responsible for funding local services; whether federal, state, regional, local, or a combination thereof, as well as to what degree, has been increasingly evident.

In addition, the failure of the state to adequately fund required County programs very often shifts costs to the County. For example, the failure of the state to build adequate capacity in its mental health system forces the County to house individuals locally who are required to be treated in a hospital setting (which is increasingly difficult due to capacity issues). Also, the state has imposed legislative mandates on the criminal justice system, most of which are not reimbursed. For example, three-strike legislation, domestic-violence reporting and investigation, gang and drug prosecution and/or diversion require significantly more time and resources to meet legislative mandates with no concomitant funding streams to support the mandated effort.

In the realm of health care, the state mandates the County to provide health care to “all incompetent, poor, indigent etc.” living in the County (County Medical Services Program, i.e., CMSP). When this legislation was passed approximately thirty years ago, the County of Sonoma’s population did not meet the bar for a large county (over 300,000) and so it became part of consortium of approximately twenty-eight other counties who shared funds provided by the State. In 2000, the State “deferred” (pulled) \$20 million a year of funding for CMSP to help balance the State budget, forcing the Counties in the consortium to raise the level of individuals and families eligible for subsidy to 200% of the federal poverty level. This translates to more people having less or no access to health care.

The state also mandates the County to provide mental health services. However, there has been insufficient “realignment funding”, no Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for years, and the state currently owes the County over \$3 million for services provided in prior years without a definite timetable for repayment. Finally, federal and state Alcohol and Drug Treatment (AOD) funding has been reduced over the past five years and there has been no COLA to the County for over 15 years; the expectation is that counties will meet local needs.

In what some saw as an overt attempt to acquire real estate assets, the state took over the court system from all counties; included in the plan is a transfer of any facilities within which they are housed. In addition, the state is requiring the County to seismically retrofit these buildings at a cost to the county of up to \$15M. At this time, the future of the Court/County relationship is unknown. Continued co-location of services is vitally important, since relocation of criminal courts would greatly reduce criminal justice system operational effectiveness and efficiency, and at the same time increase costs. The role and location of the Probation Department and probation services is currently very uncertain. For example, the Chief Probation Officer runs a county department largely funded by the County, but who essentially must answer to the Judges. The County has the responsibility to provide (i.e., fund) these services, but limited authority, while the courts have the authority with limited responsibility for funding these services. There is a possibility the State may move to transfer the probation function to the state, similar to the approach they took with the court system. To complicate matters further, there is a state movement to delegate parole supervision (a state funded department) to County Probation Departments, with no guarantee of any maintenance of effort (MOE) funding stream.

State and federal governments have also pursued strategies to ensure consistency in service delivery, independent of which county is providing the service. They have done this through mandating processes, for example, requiring county departments to use specific computer technology systems, i.e. child support services, courts, and human services. This complicates any technology standardization efforts by the County, e.g., problems of coordinating communications

surfaced among Work Group members during the strategic planning process itself. As a result, development of agency-specific technological services, even within the County environment, has been problematic. Information systems are being built around a specific agencies' needs for applications, i.e. Transportation/Public Works built their own, however, Human Services, Child Protective Services and the courts are developing systems to conform with state models. Lack of coordination at the state level also impacts individual County departments. AOD prevention dollars are distributed for similar services through several state agencies, from the Governor's Office to a number of state departments, e.g., Department of Corrections, and alcohol and drug programs. Each entity has their own priorities for funding and needs, and the County struggles to coordinate at the local level within the confines of different standards and requirements.

Emerging as an increasingly important jurisdictional dynamic impacting the County's services and infrastructure is the interface between the County and tribal governments. Pursuing strategies to serve their respective constituencies, various Native American tribes are actively looking for and developing gaming sites and facilities on tribal lands in unincorporated areas of the County. Infrastructure needs (roads, water, waste water, etc) can be onerous, not to mention service delivery needs associated with the gaming industry and the people it draws. However, the current Draft Environmental Impact Study on the casino proposed for the west side of Rohnert Park was silent on both mental health and AOD issues overall, but especially in the two sections on *Socioeconomic Conditions* and *Public Health and Safety*, all of which can have significant impact on demand for County services.

Finally, cooperative relationships between federal, state, and regional entities and County officials continue to degrade as a result of key people retiring, terming out of legislative positions, and being lured away from jobs at critical contact points, resulting in a loss of institutional knowledge, project history and background. For example, state legislative term limits have resulted in the loss of current advocates or champions for mental health and/or AOD in the legislature. This loss of knowledge and experience base removes consistency and forces the fields to start over in the education of the legislature in building trust and finding a "champion" who knows the fields to provide advocacy and leadership over time. This also has a direct impact on the State Departments the County has to work with on a daily basis by vesting more power with the agency as opposed to elected representatives.

Historically, these key relationships have been critical in helping the County and other governmental agencies meet their respective goals and objectives, seeing projects through to completion, facilitating processes that serve all partners, and efficiently delivering services and products. Replacement personnel may not have the levels of experience or trust, nor the benefit of understanding relationships and their evolution. This results in incremental progress on smaller issues and decreasing effectiveness with state legislators. This, coupled with an increased reliance on consensus-based policies and decision making and a growing polarization and focus on single issues, fuels the perception that government is non responsive.

One result has been a tremendous increase in initiative-based legislation addressing focused issues, and a proliferation of ballot measures and formation of special districts designed to serve specific, very local, constituencies which further complicates coordination. Since the beginning of 2001, 90 local measures have been on the ballot in Sonoma County (though not all involved revenue generation), and 11 new special districts have been formed (current total: 88, not including schools). While in some cases, these initiatives have resulted in targeted funding for important local needs (e.g., Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act), in many cases, poorly written ballot language and accompanying documents have resulted in significant implementation problems at the local level.

## B. Cities Issues

Five of the nine cities within the County were contacted for information, and all five noted that they had a good working relationship with the County, pointing to a number of successful collaborative efforts. The County-wide REDCOM dispatch and communications project, Geysers wastewater project, animal shelter, numerous collaborative road development and maintenance projects, Agriculture and Open Space District efforts and contracts with the Cities of Sonoma and Windsor for law enforcement services are all examples of this collaborative spirit. The cities appreciate the fact that the County is generally very open in its processes and takes an active role in sharing relevant information about upcoming projects, with no hidden agendas and a genuine willingness to collaborate with the cities on areas of mutual interest.

However, the County's ability to move projects and initiatives forward and get things done is seen as problematic, relative to the length of time required to navigate through the County bureaucracy. The Board of Supervisors is seen (both inside the County and by City Representatives) as more willing to pursue a course of action to placate special interests groups and mollify vocal critics, than to invest time and energy in developing long-term strategies for more complex issues. The top five recurring jurisdictional topics that surfaced in this data collection phase were:

- Water Capacity and Access,
- Sphere of Influence and Land Use Policies,
- Transportation,
- Solid Waste, and
- Maximizing Resources.

### Water Capacity and Access:

Five Cities were interviewed (Sonoma, Rohnert Park, Petaluma, Windsor and Santa Rosa). Sonoma, Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Rohnert Park identified water supply as a continuing source of frustration. The town of Windsor noted that they have worked well with the Sonoma County Water Agency, including sharing some facilities. The other cities, however, described a more strained relationship. One viewpoint was that Agriculture uses a sizable portion of potable water, a valuable resource, when reclaimed water could serve, thereby freeing up some of that resource for use by the Cities. One point of contention revolves around which parties would pay for any changes to the current system of water allocation and delivery. This would also be a point of contention, if it were even possible, to build a pipeline direct from Lake Sonoma, as one city representative suggested, ostensibly sidestepping a number of agencies' permitting processes and making water more readily available to Cities.

Petaluma and Cloverdale are pursuing aggressive conservation strategies to offset the need for any new developments. Some interviewees maintained that this is a sub-regional issue, and the cities would like the opportunity to work more closely with the County in developing a plan that could meet their interests as well as those of the County. The Sonoma County Water Agency is, in fact, currently meeting with city representatives in an effort to inform and educate them furthering the goal of building future collaborations on water supply issues.

Maximizing local ground water supply, concerted efforts to recycle urban water, increased application of conservation efforts, and an assessment of impacts and availability of water supply prior to development are State Water Board policies. Water use has to be justified and in every case environmental impacts have to be considered. To complicate the issue, obtaining new water rights is particularly onerous. The State Water Board has a backlog of over 500 water rights issues for the Russian River Valley alone, which constitutes 75% of its total work state-wide. The State Water

Board has issued very few water rights over the past fifteen years, and in the last year they have issued only five. Any application for new water rights will have to include buy-off from Federal Fish and Wildlife and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, State of California Fish and Game, and the residents of the Russian River Valley in both Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. In addition, the State Water Board reviews applications as they are filed, so as currently configured, all previous applications (including the backlog of 500) will need to be reviewed and acted upon before any new applications can be reviewed. AB2121 mandates the State Water Board adopt rules and regulations to complete the process in a more timely fashion. The funds devoted to that effort, however, were minimal and there are no explicit requirements for compliance other than to “speed up the process”.

#### Sphere of Influence and Land Use Policies:

Land use policies affecting quality of life for city residents continue to be a priority for city governments. Several of the larger cities, such as Santa Rosa and Petaluma, have significant unincorporated areas within their sphere of influence that are served by the County. This issue impacts multiple city and County departments. Public Safety (Fire and Police) responds to complaints about jurisdictional responsibility, disparate response times and the coordination of efforts. Planning and Community Development respond to complaints about permitting processes, inconsistent and sometimes-competing standards, and environmental issues associated with different zoning standards regulating noise, sewer, water, and flood control. In addition, there is disagreement among the cities relative to competing perspectives and policies on land use and development. Consequently there is occasional dissatisfaction by all. One area where there appears to be agreement is the policy by the County that all growth should be city-centered.

The continued annexation of the County islands in Roseland, with the excessive overlap of service delivery due to the many jurisdictions responsible for this small geographic area, is a major area of concern. There are no current funds or funding structures for bringing roads, sidewalks etc. to city standards. In addition, there is some confusion regarding the role of the cities, unincorporated areas, and hospital districts about each other's mission, responsibility (for service, payment and funding), and authority relative to environmental health and emergency services.

#### Transportation

There are multiple public transportation systems operating within the County, each managed by local, County and regional agencies. While much effort has been made to coordinate transit stations, days of operation, routes and schedules, each is operated by a different entity and with independent administration, operation and maintenance functions. Coordinating between these multiple agencies and constituencies requires time and energy, which has led to increased inefficiencies and service. Lack of transportation funds, however, has restricted potential service delivery improvements. There is support for and progress toward the development of a passenger rail system (SMART), including a sales tax measure on the November, 2006 ballot to fund system construction, operation and maintenance.

In addition, the funding structure to support road improvements to major highways, arterial and collector streets outside of city jurisdictions is seen as inequitable. New residential, commercial and industrial developments in neighboring cities increase trips per day through a city that may have become the center of a work to home commute. A system to link these costs more accurately to the source of new development is an issue that needs to be resolved. The same can be said for County roads, which are used to traverse between cities. Regional mitigation fees may provide an opportunity for cities and the County to more effectively fund future regional projects.

Both the cities and the County are working together to expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, thus taking advantage of state and regional grants as well as local sales tax enhancements. Of particular note is the proposed SMART project, which includes a bike path traversing multiple jurisdictions.

There is no funding for maintenance of County roads not designated as major arterial or collector streets (for more detail, See Work Group 3 Report). This year, the County will receive \$22 million in federal funds targeted at infrastructure development and maintenance for arterial and collector streets. Unfortunately this falls well short of the overall need. Finally, there are efforts underway to improve the 101 corridor. These projects will, however, take anywhere from 5-10 years to complete.

#### Solid Waste

Cities are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with a lack of progress on a long-term waste management plan that would minimize costs and maximize efficiencies. Current landfill capabilities are not meeting city interests, and one city has elected to negotiate its own contract for waste management, withdrawing from participation in the County program. Other cities are considering this alternative as well. A long-range plan, agreed upon by the County and the cities, was derailed due to costs associated with the mitigation, because of soils and geology factors at the central landfill site. Planned capacity evaporated and now there is an evaluation as to whether the County can even site another landfill within the County proper, since there is no way currently to expand the central landfill without incurring exorbitant mitigation costs.

Garbage costs include not only handling and transportation, but also the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the landfill site to ensure compliance with environmental regulations that continue to be in force well after the site is closed (in perpetuity). This responsibility significantly impacts operation and maintenance costs, which traditionally have been passed on to the consumer. As tonnage shrinks under efforts to reduce overall waste, and the costs associated with transporting, disposing and maintaining site environmental integrity go up, the unit price increases substantially. The question on the table is whether the cities and County want to approach this issue cooperatively or independently.

#### Maximizing Resources.

All jurisdictions are looking to ensure that services delivered and infrastructure built, maintained and operated for their constituents are supported financially. Cities have come to rely primarily on sales tax revenues to fund general fund services, while the County has come to rely more heavily on property taxes to do the same. Most recently, cities have begun pursuing redevelopment strategies to fund local infrastructure improvements, thereby impacting property taxes and reducing County revenue. For example, Santa Rosa recently employed this strategy for the Gateway project, and Petaluma is considering doing something similar. This approach has become popular throughout the State, and signals a strategy by the cities to build funding structures that will have significant negative impacts on County governments' ability to deliver services and maintain infrastructure for all County residents.

In addition, the City of Santa Rosa represented that they recently formed a Community Services District (special tax district) that covers the entire city. The purpose of this district is to develop resources to fund infrastructure and service delivery needs through new development, passing costs on to developers and subsequently the new homeowners. This is consistent with a growing trend of establishing special districts and/or enterprise funds to meet city general fund needs through structured assessments, as opposed to relying on sales tax revenues. Notwithstanding their own interests in developing ongoing funding structures, the cities expressed a conceptual concern about

impacts on County funding. They have expressed an interest in developing a county-wide approach through which policies for resource development would be more structured, allowing for the development of city and county strategies that act in concert, reducing the need to compete in the same arenas. However, recent experience with the City of Santa Rosa's actions regarding establishment of the Gateways Redevelopment Area are at odds with this stated concern.

This is especially significant given that both the cities and the County have the ability to pass voter approved dedicated sales taxes in 1/8 cent increments, up to a capped county-wide limit. To the extent that any of the cities or the County pursue a strategy to increase their sales tax base it detracts from the other's ability to do the same once the cap is met.

The County and cities traditionally apply a development fee to any new commercial or residential development in order to meet infrastructure needs. Rarely do either the cities or the County consider the impacts on the other, nor do they factor in fees or assessments to offset that impact. It is more problematic for the County than the cities, as a policy of promoting city-centered growth leads to most development occurring in the city. This means there is no funding structure put in place at the time of the development to meet the needs of the new residents and businesses for anticipated County services.

The County and the cities also have the option of increasing revenue through Transient Occupancy Taxes, voter approved Special Assessment Districts, Business Licenses, Fees for Service, and Utility Taxes. The County and cities pursue these revenue-generating strategies relatively independently, and in some cases these voting constituencies overlap. In those cases they are asking for financial resources from the same source. Even when these voter constituencies do not overlap, there remains with the larger voting public a perception that government (there being limited distinction between the various forms and levels of thereof) is reducing their disposable income, which very often leads to tough choices on which initiative or proposition to support.

Cities have expressed an interest in further developing efforts to address common concerns (gangs, drugs, family services, etc.) through multi-agency, inter-jurisdictional, and even multi-disciplinary means. Some Cities (Rohnert Park, Sonoma, and Windsor) have successfully employed a juvenile diversion program to deal with minor offenses, thereby reducing the impact on County Departments (Probation, District Attorney and Public Defender). Santa Rosa, through measure "O," has established a funding structure to support gang intervention and prevention efforts. These efforts may reduce the impact on these same County Departments as well as on the Sheriff's Department Detention Division. In this, the County has the same interests, preferring to approach these collaborations with countywide strategies as opposed to the current piecemeal patchwork that has developed over the course of the past decade.

Contracting for law enforcement services by municipalities has long been a successful law enforcement delivery model in larger counties. Given the positive experiences in the cities of Sonoma and Windsor, it is reasonable to conclude that some of the smaller cities in the County may be open to exploring similar contracting opportunities. Larger cities are less likely to pursue this strategy due to economies of scale, labor relationships, and M.O.U.s/J.P.A.s with other governmental agencies. The City of Santa Rosa does contract for animal regulation services and mail courier services with the County, while the County contracts with the City of Santa Rosa for some traffic signal maintenance. Clearly there is a benefit being realized in contracting with another governmental agency for services, which then raises the question: are there other opportunities that are not being realized?

As noted above, when cities promote expansion of their community boundaries, there appears to be little or no consideration on impacts to the County health system, especially mental health and AOD services systems. Housing and redevelopment policies by the various governmental agencies continue to be somewhat problematic, especially as they relate to the administration of Federal Section 8 housing funds and the coordination of development of affordable housing.

### **C. Regional Issues**

Currently the County participates in a number of regional endeavors, most notably in the transportation, air quality and water resource arenas. Some examples of County departments working on a regional basis include:

- The Sheriff's Office and District Attorney's Office participation in regional task forces on gangs, drugs and white collar/technology crimes.
- County parks and the library system also operate on a regional basis working closely with other cities and school districts to pool resources for common community needs.
- County Transit provides transit services between cities.
- Regional waste water efforts.

Others include EMS, the Public Health Lab and Endangered Species Act protection.

There is dialogue at the state level about regionalizing public safety services in order to maximize system capacities. Questions being asked at the legislative analyst level include:

- Why shouldn't we house adult and juvenile offenders regionally?
- Is there a reason for state prisons to be distinct from County jails?
- Is there a reason why law enforcement can't be done on a regional or systems basis?

Options being considered include:

- Establishment of regional districts which would disburse state and federal pass-through monies based on priorities established by the region.
- Promoting efficiencies and improving collaboration through standardized approaches and consistent service-delivery practices in an interdependent criminal justice system.

Though it is only in the "brainstorming" phase, these dynamic jurisdictional shifts are being considered as a burgeoning awareness/sensitivity to the interconnectedness of the various arms of the criminal justice system becomes more evident. How does a change in one aspect influence/affect the others? (i.e., hiring more police—what does that do to detention, courts, probation, etc?). The essence would be fulfilling systems-based needs on a regional level through joint powers agreements and other creative mechanisms. Currently the state is under a court order to reform the California Youth Authority system and one of the models being proposed is a regional system.

There are also a large number of non-governmental and community-based organizations that provide a variety of services through contracts with various County departments. These organizations have become important players in addressing quality of life issues in the County and are being impacted by federal and state funding policies, just as the County is being impacted.

### **Status Quo Future**

The following is an extrapolation of what the County may face should the operating environment continue as currently described.

The policies and actions of federal, state, regional and local governments will significantly impact the County's ability to perform its role. External priority setting and policy making by these governmental

bodies will drive greater legislative mandates and regulation. County funding sources will become less stable. Revenue will continue to decrease as the state cuts support for local services to address state budget deficits. Cities will also continue to erode the County's ability to generate revenue.

Relationships with personnel in key contact points will continue to deteriorate. The resources that are available will be allocated in a more prescribed manner, consistent with the policies of funding agencies. As resources dwindle, community confidence in government will continue to erode, resulting in more initiative-based legislation (government by proposition), more special districts, and competing priorities and interests by diverse community groups.

Various populations will become more strident in their efforts to get their respective interests and needs met, and cities will continue to press for resolution of water, land use, waste management, and transportation issues. It is likely that litigation will be one of the strategies special interest groups will increasingly employ, placing an increased burden on County Counsel and leading to a more fractured community.

Without a common vision, County department heads will react to the changing environment as best they can, relying on their individual assessments while cooperation and collaboration take place in a haphazard fashion. As funding has become tighter, there has been greater collaboration between departments within County functional sub-groups, but competition for shrinking resources will foster separation between the larger functional groups as each looks out for its partners. With no master plan, services and programs will be eliminated in a piecemeal fashion with no coordination, sense of shared mission or common purpose.

All of the above will take place in a "fast food" society, i.e., demand for higher levels of service and expectations of quicker responses will be the norm; many constituents will push for the ability to access County systems and data bases for information and services from their desktop (at least those who know where to go to access the information), all amid a growing distrust of government in general.

## Section 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

### Strengths

1. The Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator and department heads are very involved in state and federal legislative issues; many sit on professional boards and belong to statewide associations. In addition, the county contracts with a paid lobbyist to represent it's needs at the state and federal levels.
2. The Board of Supervisors tenure is typically long. They are full-time elected officials with multiple roles, and as such, are well informed and understand the linkages between federal, state and local issues. This understanding is strengthened through their participation on various bodies, such as:
  - a. Board of Directors for the Water Agency
  - b. Air Pollution Board
  - c. Sonoma County Transportation Authority
  - d. Open Space Authority
  - e. Community Development Commission
  - f. Bay Area Conservation and Development Commission
  - g. Bay Area Quality Air Management District

- h. Association of Bay Area Governments
  - i. Golden Gate Bridge District
  - j. California State Association of Counties
  - k. National Association of Counties
  - l. California Coastal Commission
3. The County has significant real estate assets and a relatively large reserve and employs sound fiscal policies, which have allowed for sustainability of most services.
  4. The County has a value of collaboration with local governments and special districts exemplified by a number of successful regional efforts and endeavors. Some department heads, initiate their own efficiency and collaboration opportunities both internally and externally.
  5. The County has a “county-wide” perspective relative to its dealings with the state,

### **Weaknesses**

1. The speed of the County’s decision-making is characterized as overly slow.
2. There are a large number of local districts, and collaboration is problematic
3. The County’s size, both in geographic area and the number of employees and departments, works against its coordinating efforts.
4. Economies of scale are not really maximized, given the number of potential partners in any given endeavor.
5. Some department heads act independently of Board of Supervisors due to legislative responsibilities. There has been a history of autonomy at the department level.
6. Local jurisdictions view the county as the County views the state, i.e., there is a sense that the County imposes its will without sufficient consideration of local conditions and needs.
7. Due to the scope of their responsibilities and the complexity of the issues they must confront, the Board of Supervisors are spread very thinly, requiring a steep learning curve for new Supervisors.

### **Opportunities**

1. Due to tighter funding and other cost-saving interests, cities appear to be more willing to discuss interdependencies and areas of collaboration, i.e. infrastructure (solid and waste water management, transportation, water), co-location of services, shared facilities and services which have been traditionally provided by the County (youth diversion, gang prevention, intervention, etc.).
2. The County enjoys high credibility and a good reputation in providing law enforcement services and fleet maintenance to cities.
3. The County enjoys high credibility and a good reputation through its participation in local, state, and federal task forces.
4. Federal and state funding streams are funneled through the County, and in many cases, this encourages multi-jurisdictional problem solving while maintaining County access and control.
5. Sonoma County continues the trend of measured growth, both in population and in diversification of its economy.
6. Sonoma County enjoys an engaged electorate.



7. To the extent that Native American tribes continue to explore development and revenue strategies, any dependence on County services related to infrastructure needs provides an avenue for cooperation.

### Challenges

1. Local cities, the State of California, the Federal Government, local Native American Tribal Councils and special districts' Boards of Directors have the ability to unilaterally affect County operations, including funding and regulations. The County is not in direct control of a significant portion of its revenues.
2. New financial strategies are being pursued by all jurisdictions (i.e. redevelopment efforts) to enhance revenue sources. Many of these strategies do now, or will in the near future, detract from County revenue sources.
3. There will be times when the County's interests will be at odds with other governmental bodies, which will require the exercise of influence and power.
4. The political landscape is unusually complex and unpredictable.
5. Annexations and the proliferation of water and special districts make it difficult for the county to meet disparate expectations of a diverse County with micro-climates and micro-cultures.
6. There is currently no long-term solution to the County's infrastructure (solid and waste water management, transportation, water) needs and natural resource management.
7. County and city land-use policies and development decisions lack coordination.
8. Building trust among jurisdictions with disparate interests is problematic.



## Appendix A: State and Federal Mandates

The following table provides detailed information on the range of impacts Federal and State policies have on many of the County's Departments and functions (grouped by Functional Area).

(Table Under Development)

