

Fred Allebach

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Public Comment for ABAG 10/15/20 Executive Board meeting
Concerning whether to approve the RHND Option 8a

President Arreguin, Supervisor Rabbitt, Council Member McKenzie and members of the ABAG Executive Board,

I respectfully ask you to please read my comments. I believe I have strong points to support asking you to **please vote NO on Option 8a** and send it back to re-do the RHND formula and get higher RHNA allocation numbers for the City of Sonoma *and* the contiguous Springs unincorporated urban area of Sonoma County.

Option 8a is unfair for Sonoma and the Sonoma Valley urban cluster. Here are my reasons.

Option 8a reduced Sonoma's RHNA allocation from 480 to 330. No one in the public knows what other ABAG, RHND options were considered.

From 2000 -2020 (from RHNA website data), the city of Sonoma under-produced moderate, low and very low units by 236 and over-produced above moderate by 293 units. This shows that Sonoma has sorted more and more to the high end and become more segregated.

A 2019 City of Sonoma-sponsored public meeting series called Housing Our Community was held. 30-50 civically active, well-informed members of the public attended each of the three meetings. The consensus public recommendation for Sonoma over the 6th RHNA cycle was for 735 new units with 52% being deed-restricted.

Sustainable Sonoma, a broad coalition of local interest groups (from the local Chamber to environmental groups to social equity advocates) endorses higher housing numbers of all types, and especially for affordable housing. As a member of the Sustainable Sonoma council, and a Housing Our Community series participant, I can say that there is substantial public opinion that would not back a letter from the city asking the RHND methodology committee to lower the city's RHNA allocation. We were not asked to weigh in.

Sonoma's population is 11,000 but the city is immediately ensconced in an urban cluster of 32,000 that would be the fourth largest city in the county after Rohnert Park. The notion that the City of Sonoma is a discreet, small, rural town is simply not true. Sonoma is an island of privilege inside a larger 32,000 person urban cluster where the majority of people are disenfranchised and where Sonoma's 11,000 people have a whole city government to themselves.

The US Census shows Sonoma to be 87% white and 77% non-Hispanic white, while the contiguous Springs unincorporated area is 50% Latino. There are 11,600 Latinos in the Springs urban area.

There are US Census [disadvantaged communities](#) in the Springs where area median incomes are in the low and very low categories.

Numerous local studies show serious Sonoma Valley Inequity: [Hidden in Plain Sight](#) study, Economic Development Board [demographic study](#), Hanna Institute [Foralezas study](#), North Bay Jobs With Justice's [State of Working Sonoma Fall 2018](#). The City of Sonoma's upscale, exclusivity stands in stark contrast to its "other side of the tracks", displaced workforce.

How does Sonoma get to lower its RHNA allocation for 480 to 330 when its workforce only gets a diffuse county RHNA allocation that does not address the unified need here in Sonoma Valley? The notion that Sonoma needs to protect its small town character and have adjustments made in Option 8a for its unique regional geography is belied by the demographic stats of the unified urban cluster here, by the number of people already displaced by gentrification, and by the demonstrable Sonoma RHNA under-performance in creating affordable housing.

If Sonoma County's own RHNA does not account for Sonoma Valley's discreet demographic situation, and bump up the RHNA allocation for the Springs, this will in effect further disenfranchise local Latinos, and also allow Sonoma to lower its RHNA allocation with Option 8a, and skate as the same kind of Huntington Beach fantasy island that the RHNA fair share housing policy is supposed to directly address and mitigate.

This whole picture demonstrates that the real housing needs here are being elided by a municipal shell game where Sonoma tries to protect its privilege and lower its RHNA allocation while the Springs keeps getting the short end of the stick.

I suggest not approving Option 8a for Sonoma, and reinstating the Option that had 480 as the RHNA allocation.

Thank you for your consideration.
Fred Allebach