



## **Town of Windsor General Plan Update**

### **Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report April 6, 2015**

**Prepared for the  
Town of Windsor  
By Mintier Harnish**

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# Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

This Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report is intended to focus community attention on key issues and opportunities that have major policy implications as Windsor considers how to grow and change over the next 25 years. The Report summarizes input from the stakeholder interviews, focus group meetings, online town hall forum (<http://windsor2040.mindmixer.com/>), and Planning Commission and Town Council, as well as information and data from the Draft Background Report and Town staff observations.

This Report is organized into two major parts. The first part provides an overview and the purpose of the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report. It summarizes how the Report relates to other General Plan Update documents and the process, lists the sources of information used to develop this Report, and provides an overview of the Report's organization and contents. The second part discusses key assets, issues, and opportunities that have been identified to this point in the Update process.

### *What is an Asset?*

An "Asset" is a valued characteristic or feature of the community that the Town can preserve or enhance through the General Plan.

### *What is an Issue?*

An "Issue" is an important unsettled matter, challenge, or problem that needs to be addressed through the General Plan.

### *What is an Opportunity?*

An "Opportunity" is a unique, favorable, or advantageous condition in the community on which the Town can capitalize through the General Plan.

## Relationship to Other General Plan Update Documents

As described above, the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report serves as a tool in the development of the updated General Plan. It is one of several documents that will be produced during the General Plan Update process as either a support document or part of the adopted General Plan. These documents include the following:

### **General Plan Update Support Documents**

As part of the General Plan Update, the Town will prepare several support documents that will serve as building blocks for the adopted General Plan and analyze the environmental impacts associated with implementing the Plan. These documents include the following:

#### *Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report*

Based on public input and information gathered for the Background Report, this report identifies key Town assets, issues, and opportunities to be addressed in the General Plan.



### *Alternatives Report*

For any planning effort there will be a number of possible courses of action a community may pursue. The Alternatives Report will present land use scenarios and policy approaches that can be used to address the various issues and opportunities. The report will evaluate the land use alternatives for their short-term and long-term social, economic, and environmental effects on Windsor. Decision-makers will select one or a combination of alternatives as the “preferred alternative.” Once the preferred alternative is selected, Town staff and the Consultants will develop goals, policies, implementation programs, and land use and circulation diagrams based on that alternative.

### *Environmental Impact Report*

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will evaluate the potential environmental effects of implementing the General Plan pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Town Council and Planning Commission will use the EIR during the General Plan Update process to understand the potential environmental impacts and to refine the General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs to mitigate those impacts to the extent feasible.

## **General Plan Documents**

### *Revised General Plan Vision*

The existing 1996 General Plan Vision has been revised to reflect current community values and the community’s aspirations for the next 25 years of growth and change in Windsor. The updated Vision will be incorporated into the Policy Document and will serve as a foundation for the goals, policies, and implementation programs.

### *Background Report*

The Background Report represents a “snapshot” of current (2014/15) Windsor conditions and trends. It provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics about the community, such as demographics and economic conditions and projections, land use, public facilities, environmental resources, and safety hazards. The Report provides context for making policy decisions, and is purposely policy neutral. The Background Report will also serve as the environmental setting section of the EIR.

### *Policy Document*

The Policy Document is the most important part of the General Plan. It contains the Vision and the goals and policies that will guide future Town decisions. It includes implementation programs that will ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out. The Policy Document also contains the land use diagram, which establishes the distribution of land uses throughout the town, and the circulation diagram, which lays out the town street and highway system.



## Sources of Assets, Issues, and Opportunities

The Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report was prepared by the Consultants with direction from Town staff using a variety of sources, including the following:

### *Stakeholder Interviews*

On May 27 - 29, 2014, the Consultants conducted interviews with key community leaders and stakeholders to gather feedback on key issues and opportunities that should be addressed during the General Plan Update process. The Consultants interviewed 32 people, including elected officials, Town staff, representatives from major institutions and organizations, business-owners, development interests and real estate agents, and others. The report summarizing these interviews can be found at <http://www.windsor2040.com/documents/>.

### *Focus Groups*

On August 7 and 8, 2014, and October 1, 2014, the Consultants facilitated four focus group meetings with a total of 40 community members to gather feedback on key topics to be addressed during the General Plan Update process. At the focus group meetings, participants discussed issues, assets, and opportunities related to:

- Transportation, Circulation, and Mobility;
- Growth Control, Special Planning Areas, and Annexation;
- Parks and Recreation, Public Safety, Health, and Quality of Life;
- Economic Development, Tourism, Town Green, and Community Image; and
- Youth, Education, and the Library.

### *Online Town Hall Forum*

The Town conducted an online town hall forum (<http://windsor2040.mindmixer.com/>) that allowed residents to communicate with each other, Town leaders, and Town staff about the issues relevant to Windsor. The forum, open from August 15 - October 31, 2014, allowed residents to provide input on the following topics used in this Report:

- **Why Windsor?** What makes Windsor unique that isn't found anywhere else? What about your community makes you most proud?
- **Health and Quality of Life.** The General Plan Update offers an opportunity to improve the health and quality of life of residents. Where do you think we should begin?
- **Transportation and Mobility.** What transportation issues do you think the Town should address?



- **Growth and Development.** What kind of housing do you think Windsor's young adults, families, and seniors will need in the future?
- **Economic Development.** What kinds of retail businesses would you like to see in Downtown Windsor or in your neighborhood to meet your family's day-to-day needs?

#### *Planning Commission Town Council Study Sessions*

On May 27, 2014, the Town held a joint study session with the Town Council and Planning Commission to provide a common understanding of the need for and purpose of the General Plan Update, the key steps in the Update process, the outreach program, legislative mandates, and other important issues affecting this important project. During the study session, Council members and Commissioners discussed their expectations for the Update process and resulting General Plan. On August 26, 2014, Town staff and the Consultants facilitated a joint study session with the Planning Commission and Town Council to discuss Windsor's assets, issues, and opportunities. On October 1, 2014, the Town Council held a study session to review the results of the stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and online town hall forum and provided input on additional assets, issues, and opportunities.

#### *Background Report Findings*

The Background Report identifies a list of key findings concerning economic and demographic conditions and projections, land use, community design, housing, healthy communities, transportation and circulation, public facilities and services, natural and cultural resources, and hazards and public safety. These findings were used to inform the assets, issues, and opportunities identified by the public and to identify additional topics summarized in this Report.

#### *Latino Open House*

On January 11, 2015, Town staff from Parks and Recreation and Community Development hosted an open house at the Agatha Furth Center to receive community input on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the General Plan Update. Bilingual staff and volunteers guided participants through an interactive process to identify likes and dislikes of current facilities, programs, and possibilities for the future. Youth and teens were encouraged to participate, with their responses tracked in different colors on the display boards. Approximately 250 people visited the open house, which was conveniently held immediately following the Catholic Church service on-site.

#### *Town Staff and Consultant Observations*

Town Staff and the Consultants identified several key assets, issues, and opportunities based on their understanding and knowledge of the town. This list is largely based on Town staff experience through their day-to-day work implementing the 1996 General Plan.



# Summary of Assets, Issues, and Opportunities

## Introduction

The discussion of key assets, issues, and opportunities is organized under 11 topics:

- Community Image
- Economic Development
- Downtown/Town Green
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation and Mobility
- Sustainability and Resiliency
- Health and Wellness
- Hazards and Safety
- Schools and Education
- Development and Growth
- Infrastructure and Services



## Development and Growth

### Assets

#### *Sufficient Land within the Urban Growth Boundary*

Windsor has sufficient capacity to accommodate projected future growth within the current Town Limits through 2040. A jobs-housing forecast prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projects that Windsor will add 1,910 housing units and 2,150 jobs between 2010 and 2040. After accounting for planned projects and available vacant land, Windsor has capacity to add 4,842 new housing units and 7,596 new jobs under the existing General Plan.

#### *Growth Ordinance*

The Growth Control Ordinance, adopted in 1997, was established by Windsor residents to ensure growth occurred at a reasonable pace through 2017. When the ordinance expires and would need to be renewed by the voters of Windsor. The Ordinance controls future growth in an effort to protect the character and quality of life for existing and future Windsor residents. The ordinance contains findings related to land supply constraints, public services and infrastructure capacity, fiscal resources, circulation, jobs/housing balance, and affordable housing. Considering the 2017 horizon year for the Urban Growth Boundary, the Growth Ordinance may need to be updated or extended within the General Plan Update time frame.

#### *Merit Process*

The Merit Process is a development review process that the Town uses to evaluate potential development projects and allocate residential development consistent with the Town's Growth Ordinance. Many cite the Merit Process as a tool the Town has used to approve good development projects by incentivizing attention to detail and good planning principles. By making development approvals a competitive process, the Merit Process creates a favorable environment for advancing the planning and design principles important to Town staff and local residents. The Merit Process also promotes community involvement in Windsor's planning and development review process.

### Issues

#### *Merit Process*

In recent years the Merit Process has not met the expectations of either developers or Town decision-makers. Stakeholders expressed that the current system forces development applicants to offer more project amenities or feature more than what may be realistic or feasible in an effort to win approval, and then later revise their plans to something more workable. They indicated that while the process brings ideas to the Council early, the Planning Commission often changes the plan after an application has been submitted. This results in the Council providing early direction with which the Planning Commission later disagrees. The Merit Process also makes it



more expensive for developers to propose projects, which reduces the number of development applications. From the Town's perspective, while competition between potential projects brings out the best designs, the Merit Process should include a focus on financial feasibility. The recession severely reduced the number of development applicants and many of the recently proposed projects have been in priority development areas, which are exempt from the Merit Process. The limited number of projects subject to the Merit Process has substantially reduced competition among projects, reducing the utility of the Process.

### *Unavailable Western Lands*

The Lytton Band of Pomo Indians (Tribe) owns significant land holdings on the west side of town, mostly located within unincorporated Sonoma County but some within the Town's Urban Growth Boundary. The Tribe plans to use this land to establish its homeland and provide homes to Tribe members. The Tribe has also indicated its vision to acquire more land further west of Windsor that might include a wine/resort center, outside of Town limits. The Tribe has expressed interest in connecting to Town water and sewer facilities for its planned residential development of 147 units. Extending services beyond the Town's Urban Growth Boundary requires majority approval of Windsor voters. Under a proposed pledge agreement, the Tribe has offered to construct a community swimming pool as a potential community benefit. The Tribe development on the west side is a concern for some residents. The concerns include the impact of the development on the Town's infrastructure and services (e.g., sewer, water, roads).

### *Shiloh Road Village Vision Plan Area*

Stakeholders feel that the Shiloh Road Village Vision Plan, which was adopted by the Town Council in 2002, is out of date and requires updating. The Plan area includes 80 acres located along Shiloh Road between Highway 101 and Old Redwood Highway. The Plan calls for relatively high-intensity mixed-use development following "New Urbanist" design principles. While there has been some development such as the Esposti Park Apartments since inception of the Plan, much of the Plan area remains vacant or underutilized. There is some concern that the fragmented ownership of land and a lack of market support will prevent the area from ever developing in the manner outlined in the Plan. Stakeholders feel the Town should reconsider and update the Plan to address biological constraints, and provide more specific development direction on land use, roadways, and infrastructure.

### *Many Infill Sites are Constrained*

Decision makers note that many of Windsor's potential infill development sites have limited capacity due to environmental and other constraints. Development potential for many sites based on the zoning and general plan designations does not reflect the actual conditions of the site. Environmental constraints often decrease development potential and increase required mitigation, which can contribute to increased development costs. As a result, the assumed capacity may be less than what is allowed by the zoning and general plan designations and the return on investment may affect the quality of a project.



### *Development Constraints*

While the Town generally supports community growth, several constraints limit outward expansion, including high quality agricultural lands, critical wildlife habitat, and cultural resources. This is further complicated by flood risks along the Russian River, Lytton Tribe land ownership on the western edge of the town, and airport overflight zones that limit or restrict development to the south.

## **Opportunities**

### *Revisit the Merit Process*

Windsor has an opportunity to improve the Merit Process through the General Plan Update by more clearly prioritizing the location and timing of growth. By using the Growth Ordinance to create incentives for development in key growth areas, the Town could leverage the Merit Process to further its long-term development goals. The Merit Process could benefit from having a framework or set of performance-based criteria that provides clear direction and flexibility. It could also build incentives into the Ordinance that encourage development timing in line with Town expectations. The Town could also refine the Merit Process to consider financing and service demands of new projects. In the past, developers have proposed projects in order to get an allocation, only to later submit revised plans after more detailed planning and financial analysis is conducted. This is especially true of infill projects, which the Town would like to encourage.

### *Old Redwood Highway*

“Old Red Going Green”, which the Town Council adopted in 2010 as a policy guideline, is a plan to redevelop the Old Redwood Highway corridor as a mixed-use urban corridor. “Old Red Going Green” was developed by an effort by the Town and an American Institute of Architects (AIA) Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT). With many other higher-density infill projects being built and proposed around the Town Green, recent community sentiment is to develop the corridor at lower densities than those described in the Plan. The General Plan Update is an opportunity to revisit Old Red Going Green to reflect current expectations and desires for the corridor. There may also be additional opportunities to transform the highway into a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly corridor that embraces complete streets principles. Or, the Town could plan for more frequent bus or trolley service along the corridor to connect Windsor’s Downtown to Shiloh Road and neighborhoods along the corridor. Some residents have suggested roundabouts as a way of alleviating traffic and creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment along the corridor.



## Community Image

### Assets

#### *Family-Oriented Community*

Windsor is known throughout the region as a great place to raise a family. Many families choose to live in Windsor because it is safe, has relatively affordable housing, highly ranked schools and because there is a sense of community. The School District and local private schools are well regarded. Families make up about 75 percent of all households in Windsor, which is higher than all of Sonoma County and the nine-county Bay Area, where families made up less than 65 percent of households. Windsor has a high percentage of children (i.e., ages 0 to 11) and youth (i.e., ages 12 to 18). Residents under the age of 18 represent 31 percent of Windsor's population while only 24.8 percent belong to this age group countywide and 18.8 percent in the Bay Area.

#### *Town Green is an Gathering Place in Sonoma County*

Windsor's Town Green is the primary civic gathering place in the Town and a point of pride for many residents. The Town uses the Green to host events throughout the year, including free concert nights, movie nights, holiday celebrations, seasonal festivals, and a weekly farmers market. These events reflect Windsor's family-oriented character and help foster a sense of community pride among Town residents. They also draw visitors from across Sonoma County and the Bay Area.

#### *Affordable Place to Live*

Many residents move to Windsor because it offers relatively affordable housing prices. When compared to neighboring communities, Windsor's housing prices are lower. According to online listings on Zillow.com, the median sale price is currently (2015) \$488,000. The median sales prices in Healdsburg and Sebastopol are \$590,600 and \$660,000, respectively. Housing prices in Windsor have risen in recent years due to a lack of housing supply, but it still remains an affordable community compared to nearby communities. Affordable housing options have made Windsor an attractive town for families to live and raise children in Sonoma County.

#### *Safe Community, Low Crime Rate*

Windsor is a safe community. Although Windsor's population increased by 6 percent from 2009 to 2012, the violent crime rate decreased by 21 percent. Property crime also decreased during this same period by 16 percent. Safety is a characteristic that further enhances Windsor's image as a family-friendly community.

#### *Gateway to and Part of the Wine Country*

Vineyards are a mainstay of the regional agricultural economy. Local wineries are recognized internationally and there are 30 wineries and vineyards within five miles of Windsor. There is a widely held view that Windsor has great untapped potential for economic growth and vitality that is linked to the surrounding wine region and tourism.



### *Regional Parks*

Residents and visitors can experience Windsor's beautiful natural setting at three nearby regional parks: Riverfront Regional Park, Foothill Regional Park, and Shiloh Ranch Regional Park. These parks are considered natural parks, and provide open-space recreational opportunities for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, kayaking, birding, and fishing. The regional parks contribute to Windsor's identity as a great community for outdoor recreation. Residents and visitors can also enjoy Windsor and its surrounding environs via a hot air balloon ride or organized bike tours.

## **Issues**

### *Inability to Establish and Promote a Clear Identity*

Windsor is known regionally for its family-friendly environment, signature events on the Town Green, central location within the Sonoma wine country, and its relative housing affordability. However, to many, these assets do not yet add up to a clear town identity. Many feel the visual images that have been used to represent Windsor are confusing; there are too many logos and symbols (e.g., quail, grapes, oak trees) to form a coherent brand. The Town, as a whole, needs to determine which visual image(s) best represent Windsor. The characteristics that residents associate with Windsor may conflict. For example, a focus on family-friendliness may not seem compatible with an emphasis on the wine country. Windsor may be able to incorporate both characteristics into a single unique identity that differentiates the Town from other communities and plays to both of its strengths. A clear identity will help promote Windsor's assets to residents and visitors and aid in the Town's economic development efforts.

### *Divided by Highway 101*

Highway 101 divides the Town both physically and socially. In some areas, sound barriers turn the highway into a literal wall separating neighborhoods and residents. There are only three road connections between east and west, and it can be challenging to walk or bike from one side of Town to the other. Some residents feel there is a cultural divide between the east side neighborhoods and the neighborhoods of the west side. They believe Windsor will need to literally and figuratively bridge the gap between these two parts of town to successfully develop a cohesive community.

## **Opportunities**

### *Create a "Brand" for Windsor*

The lack of a clear identity for Windsor presents an opportunity to create a new brand for the community as a whole that draws on its many assets and opportunities. Windsor has evolved since it incorporated 20 years ago and now has several images: a family-friendly community, gateway to the wine country, and an activity center around the Town Green. Windsor is also located in a region known for its outdoor recreational activities. Windsor is a common launching point for cyclists in the region. The Town could use these characteristics as starting points for developing a cohesive Town identity and brand.



### *Build Community Cohesion*

The General Plan Update is an opportunity for Windsor residents to begin to bridge the gaps in the community, both physical and social. Highway 101 divides Windsor geographically; the community can plan for new crossings that could improve traffic flow for all transportation modes, which would better connect neighborhoods. The General Plan Update can also help engage a growing Latino community. The number of Latino residents in Windsor increased 58.7 percent between 2000 and 2010. Latinos now comprise nearly a third of Windsor's population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 20 percent of Windsor residents speak Spanish at home, and over 7 percent of Windsor residents speak English less than well. Town staff can use the General Plan process to continue to engage Latino residents and encourage further participation in Town planning efforts, events, and committees.

### *Build Relationships with the Lytton Tribe*

Windsor is actively engaged in working with representatives of the Lytton tribe in anticipation of the planned development of tribal lands on the west side of town. The tribe intends to build 147 homes, a community center, and a roundhouse and retreat, as well as a future resort and winery. New residents from the Lytton tribe would likely rely upon Windsor for goods and services. It is expected that children from the new tribal community would attend Windsor School District schools and participate in Windsor recreation programs and activities. The development of the Lytton tribe's new homeland offers a unique opportunity for Windsor residents and businesses to build relationships with its neighbors and embrace a new element of cultural diversity in Windsor.

## **Economic Development**

### **Assets**

#### *Airport and Airport Business Center*

The Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport, located just south of Windsor in unincorporated Sonoma County, provides commercial and private air operations transportation services in Sonoma County. The nearby Airport Business Center and immediately surrounding area hosts a health and fitness club, an 18-hole golf course, a timeshare, hotel, movie theater, restaurants, and 232 housing units. The area around the Airport Business Center hosts additional employers in the wine, health, public sector and finance industries. The Airport and the surrounding business/employment area are assets that provide employment to Windsor residents and serve as catalysts for tourism and business growth.

#### *Proximity to/Access from the Bay Area*

Windsor benefits from its proximity to the greater Bay Area. The Bay Area is home to more than seven million people living in nine counties and over one hundred cities and towns. The Bay Area's large population, as well as tourists, provides many potential customers for Windsor's goods and services. Windsor's central location in Sonoma County and on the Highway 101



corridor gives its residents direct access to jobs and other opportunities in the Bay Area. Average wages in the Bay Area range from \$28.70 an hour in the East Bay to \$34.45 an hour in the South Bay. The national average is \$22.33 an hour.

#### *Location in the Wine Country*

Sonoma County is home to almost 60,000 acres of vineyards and more than 400 wineries. There are 30 wineries and vineyards within five miles of Windsor. The county is the largest producer of wine in Northern California and wines from the area enjoy global recognition. The annual Sonoma County grape harvest is worth an estimated \$200 million and represents 61 percent of the county's total agricultural revenue. The wine industry that surrounds Windsor not only provides an economic benefit when the wine is sold, but the vineyards and tasting rooms draw a great number of tourists from around the world. More than 7.5 million visitors come to Sonoma County annually, in large part due to its wine. Windsor's location in the heart of wine country creates a viable tourism industry and supports wine-related industries.

#### *Downtown/Town Green Events*

The Town Green hosts events that draw visitors from Sonoma County and beyond. The popular "Summer Nights on the Green" concert series, held weekly from June through August, attracts thousands of visitors to Downtown Windsor on Thursday evenings. A weekly Farmer's Market is also held, and movies are shown on Tuesday evenings. A Fine Arts Show, an Earth Day Celebration, Cinco de Mayo, an October Harvest Fest, a Zucchini Festival, a Tomato and Pepper Festival, and the annual Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Grove and Winter Celebration ensure that the Town Green is a year round attraction that capitalizes on Windsor's connection to local agriculture and fine arts. Town Green events bring visitors and residents downtown, which can support shopping and dining opportunities located nearby. Similarly, the Sonoma County Hot Air Balloon Classic at Keiser Park and the Wings Over Wine Country Air Show at the Airport bring visitors to Windsor.

### **Issues**

#### *Windsor Is a Bedroom Community/Lack of Jobs for Residents*

Windsor is largely a bedroom community. Nearly 90 percent of Windsor's labor force age 25 and over works outside of town, and more than 75 percent of the jobs in the town are filled by non-residents. Job growth has not kept pace with housing development, and the town's already low jobs/housing ratio declined from 0.66 in 2002 to 0.60 in 2011. For comparison a jobs/ratio of 1.0 to 1.5 indicates a good balance of jobs and housing. The lack of jobs for residents may also contribute to the perception that more young adults leave Windsor in search of employment and other opportunities. According to the U.S. Census, a lower percentage of Windsor's population is between the ages of 20-34 (16.5 percent) compared to Sonoma County (19.3 percent), the Bay Area (21.1 percent), and California (21.7 percent).



*Tourism and the Wine Industry May Conflict with the Town's Family-oriented Character*

Windsor has potential to capitalize economically on its location in the Sonoma County wine region. However, Windsor has a character that is distinct from nearby communities that have embraced wine country tourism (e.g., Healdsburg). The challenges associated with Healdsburg may be generally related to its lack of housing affordability, excessive influence of tourism, and high cost of living, the opposite of the characteristics that draw residents to Windsor. Residents do not simply want Windsor to become another Healdsburg or a replica of any other community, but instead be its own distinctive place. Windsor's family-friendly atmosphere is frequently cited as its defining and most important attribute. Wine country tourism, however, brings with it visitors and potential issues associated with drinking alcohol, and can lead to higher costs for law enforcement. This perceived conflict between Windsor as a "family community" versus Windsor as a "wine country destination," may limit the town's ability to fully capitalize on potential wine-related tourism. However, Windsor is in a position to capitalize on both these characteristics through strategic branding and marketing of the town.

## **Opportunities**

### *Leadership in Economic Development*

There is a perception by some business owners that the Town has lacked an emphasis on economic development; that there has been a lot of discussion, but not a lot of action or investment. In part, this is due to the loss of redevelopment funding statewide, which was a source of dedicated property tax funding for economic revitalization. The Windsor Chamber of Commerce lost many members during the recession and has not regained the business support it once had. The Town and Chamber have an ongoing partnership whereby the Town funds the Visitor Center element of the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce and the Town created an Economic Development Task Force in 2012 and the Town recently (2015) hired a full-time Economic Development Manager. This creates an opportunity for the Town and business community to work more closely to expand business opportunities and create jobs. In addition, the Town has been tapping into Sonoma County's very robust regional economic development and visitor-attraction programs.

### *Job Creation*

Windsor does not currently have enough jobs to employ all its residents, so many workers commute to jobs elsewhere, primarily in Sonoma County. In 2011 there were an estimated 1,200 people who both live and work in Windsor. However, nearly 9,000 workers commute out of the town while about 4,500 commute into Windsor each day. Jobs are expected to increase in Windsor from 2010 to 2040 by almost 40 percent. This is faster than Sonoma County or the Bay Area. Both the town and the county are expected to see a surge in employment growth by 2020. A diverse economy is vital for the town to thrive and provide jobs that all residents need. Diversity can be achieved through the use of programs and activities that promote business/job retention, expansion, and new business/job development. There is also a need to find ways to encourage private-sector investment and reinvestment in



Windsor that creates the types of jobs for which residents are trained and qualified. The Town can also be proactive in attracting the right kinds of industries and employers to locate and expand in town.

### *Wine Country*

The Town is centrally located within an area of world-class wine tourism, and many believe that Windsor needs to capitalize on its proximity to vineyards, wineries, and other destinations. Windsor could promote its location in the heart of Sonoma wine country and benefit from the upscale sophisticated image associated with wine and local agriculture. A focused marketing effort that highlights Windsor's wine image would increase tourism and attract more people to Windsor's wineries, shops, restaurants, and hotels.

### *Airport Expansion*

Sonoma County is in the process of implementing improvements to the Charles M. Schulz – Sonoma County Airport that improve safety and passenger service. The County has also recently expanded both runways, which will allow for regional jet service and connect Windsor and the region with new markets and increased tourism. Jet service will also make Windsor a more attractive business hub, as the expanded runways allow for more corporate and executive travel. This may increase demand for office space and services to support travelers in Windsor, as well as increase the occupancy rate of the lodging establishments in town.

### *Complete Downtown (Tasting Rooms, Boutique Hotel, Shops, Art)*

Downtown Windsor could be a larger tourist draw with more attractions and amenities for residents and visitors, as well as jobs. A recent retail market analysis found that a boutique hotel would be compatible with Downtown Windsor and fill a market niche for upscale accommodations. The addition of a boutique hotel would draw tourists Downtown and could potentially stimulate and support restaurants, boutique shops, tasting rooms, art galleries, and other tourist-serving businesses. New buildings and establishments would also help encircle the Town Green and create an even more attractive place for visitors.

### *Sports Fields and Regional Recreation Events*

All-weather sports fields, indoor soccer fields, and other active recreation facilities could draw major sports and recreation events to the town. Currently, Wilson Ranch Soccer Park has three soccer fields, one with lights. Keiser Park has two baseball diamonds. Neither park can support the kind of tournaments that draw large numbers of visitors. Expanding facilities in these parks or developing a new sports complex could allow the Town to host sporting events and tournaments. Large tournaments would attract visitors who would stay overnight in hotels, eat at local restaurants, and shop at local stores. Recreational events could help increase interest in Windsor as a destination for recreational activities and healthy lifestyles. Sports tournaments often attract families and could enhance Windsor's image as a family-friendly town.



### *Public Art*

Public art could further beautify Windsor and define the town's unique character. The town already has some public art, notably the Town Green's historical timeline walk that features images stamped into the sidewalk. Public art can help create a unique "sense of place" that increases community pride and draws visitors. The Town could add more public art, particularly murals. The historical timeline walk could be leveraged to encourage the installation of new public art and attract tourists interested in art. In 2015, the Town Council created the Town's first Public Art Advisory Committee, whose charge will be to provide leadership and advice to the Council on public art installation opportunities throughout Town.

### *Sonoma County Agriculture Center*

Olufs Ranch, located at the corner of Shiloh Road and Conde Lane in Windsor, is a working farm that hosts a popular pumpkin patch in the fall. During the stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings, some participants expressed interest in transforming the ranch into the Sonoma County Agricultural Center. Such a center may be appropriate on the Olufs property, or in another part of town. The Center could be a public agricultural site that would support community gardeners, host youth programs about agriculture, demonstrate sustainable agricultural methods, and educate residents and visitors about the agricultural heritage of Windsor and surroundings.

## **Downtown/Town Green**

### **Assets**

#### *Established Location and Structure*

Downtown and the Town Green are key assets that together form the heart of Windsor. The Town of Windsor committed to the revitalization of Downtown Windsor in the late 1990s with the adoption of the Downtown Plan and the construction of the Town Green. In 2001, the Town Green Village development began construction and signified the rebirth of Windsor's core. Today, the Town Green serves as a gathering place and destination point for the town. The Town Green also serves as a large outdoor event space in the center of town, something most communities in the area do not have. The Bell Village development, one of the largest mixed-use projects approved in Windsor, is currently under construction north of the Town Green and includes an Oliver's Market. This project is expected to bring hundreds of additional residents, jobs, and visitors to Downtown Windsor.

### **Issues**

#### *Businesses Are Challenged Due to a Lack of Foot Traffic and Limited Continuity and Coordination*

Downtown businesses suffer from a lack of coordination. There is no one person or organization that guides the growth of Downtown businesses. During the stakeholder interviews and focus



group meetings, some participants opined that the Old Downtown Windsor Merchant Association does not do enough to coordinate business hours and marketing, and the Town currently does not directly influence the types of uses Downtown. If there was a single owner of many buildings, the owner could achieve a complementary mix of businesses. The businesses Downtown were formerly organized through a business improvement district (BID); however, due to lack of support from the businesses, the BID dissolved. Without a cohesive Downtown experience, Downtown cannot achieve its full potential. In addition, the small footprints of the commercial spaces in the Downtown limit the types of businesses that can locate in the area.

### *Parking Shortages*

Parking can be scarce downtown, particularly on Thursday evenings in the summer during free concert nights and movie nights on the Town Green. Parking is not regulated; there is no disincentive to parking in a downtown spot all day. Ample parking is often important to the success of Downtown businesses and many customers prefer to patronize businesses with available parking. As interest in the Downtown grows, Windsor will need to address the issue of parking and make it easier for residents and visitors to find parking while preserving the character of Downtown. Oliver's Market, a locally-focused, higher end grocery store under construction in Downtown, includes a parking lot but may also cause parking impacts nearby.

### *The Town Green is Incomplete*

Development does not surround the Town Green and there is adjacent underused land. Many feel the Downtown area still feels incomplete and that complementary mixed-use development is needed to fill in the gaps and encircle the Town Green. For example, the Civic Center on the northwest and the Windsor Regional Library on the northeast side of the Town Green do not create an active edge in the same way mixed-use development on the south side does. The Town is considering options to redevelop the site to better support Downtown and the Town Green. North and east of the Civic Center and across Old Redwood Highway, construction of the Bell Village development is underway. The development is one of the largest mixed-use projects to be approved in Windsor, and includes an Oliver's Market. A grocery store next to the Town Green will better serve downtown residents and bring more foot traffic and vitality to the space.

### *There Aren't Enough People Living and Working Downtown*

Downtown housing appeals to young people and those looking for an urban, downtown feel. Urban rentals contribute to a healthy mix of housing types in Windsor. Recent development Downtown included a residential component to create a mixed-use district. Despite the initial development success, Downtown still needs more housing to feel like a vibrant neighborhood. Similarly, there are businesses located Downtown, but more opportunities for offices and other employment uses are needed to activate the Downtown. Some residents feel that Downtown Windsor is still too quiet on days without an event on the Town Green. More mixed-use development will increase the number of residents living and working Downtown and contribute to a livelier neighborhood and a 24-hour center of activity.



## Opportunities

### *Station Area Plan/PDA/Planned SMART Train Stop*

The Town adopted the Windsor Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan in anticipation of Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) train service connecting Windsor to other North Bay communities through a 14-stop service running between Cloverdale and Larkspur, with bus and ferry links to San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. The Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan establishes a planning foundation for a cohesive transit-oriented community with links to the region. The plan area is also a designated priority development area (PDA). PDAs are locally-identified infill development opportunity areas within existing communities. PDAs were identified as a part of Plan Bay Area, the regional land use, housing, and transportation planning process led by Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Windsor's PDA is eligible for One Bay Area Grants (OBAG) that can be used to fund transportation improvements within the PDA. The Windsor Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan contains goals, policies, programs, and design guidelines for the land use, architectural character, and transportation network in Downtown Windsor. The successful implementation of this plan will result in a transit-oriented, vibrant, and growing Downtown.

### *Redevelop Town-owned Properties to the North*

The Town of Windsor owns the Windsor Civic Center site to the north of the Town Green. The complex includes Town Hall, which includes many of the Town's administrative departments, Huerta Gymnasium, the Windsor Library, and a community garden as well as offices for the Windsor Unified School District. The gymnasium, Civic Center, and adjacent parking lots do not reflect the character of the rest of the buildings along the Town Green. The Town has an opportunity to sell or lease the Civic Center site to developers and build a new Civic Center elsewhere or build a new Civic Center on the same site in a way that positively contributes to Downtown Windsor and the Town Green. Redeveloping the properties to the north of the Town Green would enclose the Green on all four sides and help make Downtown Windsor complete.

### *Attract a Boutique Hotel to Anchor Downtown*

If visitor growth continues to expand as expected, the Town could support additional lodging facilities, particularly a higher-end boutique hotel adjacent to the Town Green. A boutique hotel would help Windsor attract a broader range of visitors to the area and help provide additional vitality to Downtown Windsor. Guests would shop at downtown businesses and eat at local restaurants. Guests would also be conveniently located to the many festivals and events hosted on the Town Green.

### *Provide More Places for People to Live and Work in and around Downtown*

The Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan anticipates the development of 1,230 new residential and 2,160 new jobs units over the next through 2035. The majority of development (1,165 units) is expected to occur within the boundaries of the Priority Development Area, which encompasses Downtown Windsor. The Bell Village development will include 387 multifamily units and



provide much-needed housing north of the Town Green. The Windsor Mill development will provide an additional 360 multifamily units within a quarter-mile walking distance of Downtown and the Town Green. Downtown multifamily housing is essential to meet the needs of Windsor's demographic changes, while new jobs can provide places for Downtown and other residents to work. Young adults and seniors increasingly prefer urban, walkable neighborhoods. Downtown housing can ensure Windsor serves the housing needs of all residents. In addition, Downtown residents and employees are critical to the success of Downtown. They patronize local shops and restaurants, as well as provide a 24-hour presence that encourages safety and vitality.

## Housing and Neighborhoods

### Assets

#### *Windsor has Historically Been an Affordable Community with Housing/Neighborhoods Designed for Families*

Many feel that Windsor has done a good job of providing housing that is affordable throughout the community. The low prices of the 1990s and early 2000s allowed many families to move to Windsor and create a family-friendly atmosphere. A school and park typically anchor single-family residential neighborhoods. While rapidly increasing housing prices are threatening this community asset, Windsor's overall image as an affordable, family-friendly place appears to be in place at least for the near future.

### Issues

#### *Limited Housing Inventory, Especially Move-up Homes*

At the end of May 2014, there were only 21 homes for sale in Windsor; less than a one-month supply. By January 2015 that number had only increased to 43. The lowest-priced house today in Windsor is \$365,000. Two years ago prices were in the range of \$200,000 to \$300,000, and homes selling for \$300,000 are now selling for more than \$500,000. The lack of supply often causes a bidding war for homes on the market; homes are selling for asking price or higher. The lack of homes, particularly affordable ones, can price out families who want to move to Windsor. It also prevents existing residents from moving to larger homes. Windsor residents may start with an apartment or condo, but once they have a family, they typically seek a home with more room. Low single-family home inventory is due to low levels of new home construction since the recession in 2008. In the eight-year period between 2000 and 2007, the Town issued 1,344 building permits for single-family homes, and building permits for 138 duplex and multifamily units. Between 2007 and April 2014, there were only 61 single-family permits and 77 multifamily permits. Building officials throughout the county issued just 251 building permits for single-family construction last year. Prior to 2008, the county saw an average of 1,900 single-family homes built annually.



### *Increasing Demand for Housing that Meets the Needs of Young Adults and Seniors*

Windsor's demographics will substantially change the types of housing needed within the General Plan time horizon. Seniors currently make up only 10.9 percent of Windsor's population, but Windsor's middle-aged population (45 years to 64 years) jumped from 19.8 percent to 27.2 percent between 2000 and 2010. This cohort will become seniors before 2040 and increase the demand for housing that meets the needs of seniors. On the other end of the age spectrum, over 36 percent of Windsor's population is 24 or under. If the community hopes to have its young people stay in Windsor, there will need to be housing options tailored for this very large cohort. The demand for multi-generational housing will also likely increase if young people live with their parents longer and seniors move in with their children.

### *Residents in Established Neighborhoods are Generally Opposed to Increasing Densities Outside of Downtown*

There is broad community consensus on the benefits of higher-density housing in Downtown Windsor, but far less support for high densities in other parts of the community. Some members of the public do not support the small-lot subdivisions that have already been built in Windsor and would prefer to see new housing similar to Windsor's existing neighborhoods. This preference is at odds with the view that Windsor needs to build many more housing units to increase supply and lower prices.

## **Opportunities**

### *Provide More Affordable Housing*

The term "affordable housing" needs an image makeover that reflects Windsor's current housing situation. According to online listings on Zillow.com (an online real estate database), the median sale price is currently (2015) \$488,000. A house at this price is unaffordable to a family at Windsor's median income for a family of four (\$76,900). A two-person household earning \$61,500 (the median income for this family size) could only afford a \$279,000 home. There are currently no homes for sale at this price. Average rents in Windsor are estimated at \$900 per month for a studio apartment and \$1,200 for a one bedroom/one bath unit. Low-income, single-person households can only afford \$808 per month in rent. Low-income, two-person households can only afford \$923 per month in rent; a typical rental unit in Windsor would be out of their reach.

## **Transportation and Mobility**

### **Assets**

#### *Charles M. Schultz-Sonoma County Airport*

The Charles M. Schultz Airport provides the only commercial air transportation services in Sonoma County. In 2007 Horizon Air began offering nonstop scheduled commuter air service from the airport to Los Angeles and Seattle. The schedule has expanded to include daily trips to



Las Vegas and Portland. Flights are operated with 76-seat turboprop airplanes. The extension of an existing runway will also allow larger commercial carriers to service the Airport in the coming years, which will allow for regional jet service.

### *Highway 101 Access*

Windsor is located along Highway 101, which connects the town to other areas of Sonoma County, the Bay Area, and beyond. Highway 101 is a north–south U.S. highway that runs through the states of California, Oregon, and Washington, and is a major coastal linkage to areas north of San Francisco. As a commute corridor, Highway 101 connects Windsor residents with job centers to the south (e.g., Santa Rosa). As a travel corridor it connects travelers and tourists to the Sonoma County wine country. Finally, as a shipping corridor it provides the means for goods to be brought into Sonoma County region and for products produced in the county to be shipped to markets outside the county.

### *Train Depot and Transit Center*

As the centerpiece of the Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan, the Windsor Train Depot and Transit Center is a future hub for rail and bus service. The station, which opened in 2007, is adjacent to the intersection of Windsor Road and Windsor River Road. While it is currently only used by local bus operators, the Depot and Transit Center will also be a stop on the 70-mile SMART commuter rail line that will run from Larkspur to Cloverdale. Along the way, SMART will have stations at major North Bay population and job centers. The Depot and Transit Center is also a hub for local Sonoma County Transit lines and includes bicycle facilities as well as a park-and-ride lot.

### *Bike Friendly Community*

In 2012 Windsor was recognized by the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community and awarded their Bronze Award for commitment to bicycle safety and convenience. In 2008 the Town adopted a Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan, which details how the Town will create a comprehensive and connected system of bikeways and invest in future bicycle facility improvements. Windsor has also encouraged bicycling through green pavement markings that bring greater awareness to the presence of cyclists. Green bike lanes help control turning conflicts, reduce traffic weaving, and reduce injury rates. By clearly defining the roadway space that motorists need to dedicate to bicyclists, Windsor's green bike lanes help send a message that streets are multimodal public spaces.

## **Issues**

### *School-related Congestion*

As a result of Windsor's unique "Oklahoma Model" school system (i.e., grade levels grouped by school location as opposed to neighborhood schools with multiple grade levels), parents with multiple children often must drive daily between several schools, often times outside their neighborhood. While there are many advantages of grouping students of similar ages on a single campus, it also results in major traffic congestion, long traffic queues, and parking in red zones.



Some of the congestion around schools is related to the flow of traffic, inadequate parking, limited school bus service, and pedestrian traffic during peak drop-off and pick-up times. While the Town has implemented solutions such as lane restriping, better signalization, sidewalks, and partnerships with the School District to change routing on school sites, many feel there is still much room for improvement.

#### *Connections across Highway 101 are Limited*

Windsor residents have three options for crossing Highway 101: Arata Lane, Old Redwood Highway, or Shiloh Road. These crossings often create traffic bottlenecks, limit cross-town mobility, and present safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians. Traffic congestion is especially severe during community events and in the mornings and afternoon during school drop-off and pick-up times. Proposed new development in the Station Area, Downtown, and the Shiloh Road Village Vision Plan Area will continue to strain these connections. For many, addressing connectivity across Highway 101 is critical for future mobility within town.

#### *Community Opposition to Changing Roadways to Accommodate Alternative Travel Modes*

Windsor has faced community opposition to reconfiguring roadways to accommodate alternative modes. For example, residents opposed a proposed change on Brooks Road South, where the Town attempted to reduce the number of auto lanes to accommodate bike lanes. Some residents opposed this effort because they were concerned about auto access to the road. Town staff will need to communicate effectively with Windsor residents to reconfigure streets to create more complete streets to meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, and accommodate transit.

#### *Discontinuous Bikeways*

While Windsor continues to expand its bikeway system, gaps remain. Recent bicycle counts obtained for the 2014 Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan indicate that bicycle use in the town has increased nearly five-fold since 2009. Windsor provides bike lanes on most of the cross-town connectors, and the Town has completed approximately 70 percent of its planned bicycle network. Bicycle facilities, such as bike lanes, are becoming more popular among residents, but bicyclists in town indicate that they face a disjointed system and Highway 101 is a significant barrier to continuous east-west bicycle access.

#### *Lack of Bus/Transit Service*

As a small community, Windsor has limited bus and transit service. Sonoma County Transit (SCT) provides only one local and two intercity service routes, all of which have 20-minute headways. The Windsor Unified School District provides some bus service for students, but it has had to cut back on in-town bus service in order to continue busing students beyond the Town limits. SCT and the School District do not currently meet the transportation needs of residents.



## Opportunities

### *Complete Streets*

Windsor has the opportunity to support the development of a well-balanced, connected, safe, and convenient multimodal transportation network through the development of complete streets (i.e., streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities). Complete streets have been shown to bolster economic growth, improve safety and public health, and reduce congestion. Windsor adopted Complete Streets Guidelines and Complete Streets Policy in January 2013. In January 2015, the Town Council amended the General Plan to add complete streets goals, policies, and programs. By adopting the Complete Streets Guidelines and incorporating them into the Windsor General Plan, the Town is eligible for transportation project grant funding as a part of the One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG).

### *Develop New Active Transportation Corridors*

Windsor has an opportunity to develop additional bicycle and pedestrian paths along its creeks and open space corridors and connect them with the existing pedestrian and bicycle network. The Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan outlines approximately 22 miles of proposed bikeways along creeks, open space corridors, and the SMART rail track. Cyclists could benefit from connected bicycle routes that provide access to major activity centers, commercial districts, schools, transportation centers, and other destinations. Proposed trails include routes along Starr Creek, Windsor Creek, Windsor Creek Tributary, Pool Creek, Faught Creek, and an extension of the SMART trail. These corridors, if integrated into the existing roadway network, could provide an attractive alternative to driving, have positive effects on public health, reduce traffic congestion, attract new special events focused on cycling, and address the issue of connectivity. Through new General Plan policies and development standards, the Town could require trail improvements and/or access in new developments located adjacent to the Town's planned trail system, especially along creeks. By providing clear direction and potentially mandating the dedication of right-of-way for projects along trails, the Town could help establish a more comprehensive trail network.

### *Bike and Pedestrian Facilities across Highway 101*

The Town could improve bicycle and pedestrian accessibility across Highway 101 at Arata Lane, Old Redwood Highway, and Shiloh Road. At present, these crossings are not very conducive to non-auto travel modes and make traveling across Highway 101 difficult. Another opportunity to alleviate this problem is a new bicycle/pedestrian crossing over or under Highway 101. The Town is considering the feasibility of a dedicated crossing just north of Lakewood Drive and Old Redwood Highway. This crossing has the potential to significantly improve connectivity and avoid school-related congestion. It would also provide the tremendous benefit of connecting neighborhoods on the east side of town directly to the Town Green and businesses in the downtown.



### *Improve Signalization, Especially for Pedestrian Crossings*

Windsor could improve its intersection signalization to make walking more pleasant, and to help automobile traffic circulate more efficiently. Windsor has several wide streets that can make pedestrian and bike crossing uncomfortable and unsafe. Windsor could help pedestrians by changing signals to allow for flexible pedestrian crossing times that better reflect user preference and/or permissive left turns.

### *Collaborate with the School District*

While the Town and School District already work together on Safe Routes to School efforts, additional collaborations could result in a more efficient drop-off and pick-up process at local schools. Possible improvements include restoring school district bus service, using Town shuttles, encouraging kids to walk to school or carpool (e.g., walking school bus, bike pools). The Town could also consider non-traditional solutions, such as a ride-sharing app that connects families with similar drop-off routes.

## **Sustainability and Resilience**

### **Assets**

#### *Adopted GHG Emissions Reduction Target*

The Town of Windsor is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Town completed a municipal GHG inventory in 2003, and in 2009 adopted a reduction target of 26 percent below 2000 levels by 2020 for its own operations. In 2008, the Town participated in the Sonoma County Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory and adopted a resolution supporting development of a Regional Climate Protection Coordination Plan. Ongoing regional efforts such as Climate Action 2020 will build on Windsor's adopted municipal GHG reduction target and identify specific, implementable actions that Windsor can take to enhance community resilience in an ever-changing climate conditions.

### **Issues**

#### *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

Greenhouse Gas Emissions emitted as a result of human activities are causing the lower atmosphere to warm and inducing changes to the global climate system. These large-scale changes will have unique and potentially severe impacts in the western United States, California, and the Northern California region. Windsor has not yet inventoried the entire Town's GHG emissions or prepared a Townwide Climate Action Plan. According to the 2009 Sonoma County GHG emissions inventory, county residents and businesses emitted 4.3 million metric tons (MMT) of Carbon Dioxide equivalent units (CO<sub>2</sub>e). The transportation sector is the largest emissions source in the county (62 percent of emissions).



### *Climate Change Effects/Impacts*

Increases in the globally averaged atmospheric concentration of GHGs are projected to cause extreme-heat conditions, resulting in an increase in heat-related deaths; an increased risk of wildfires, increased potential for property damage; reduced water supply as a result of impacts to snow pack and stream flow; and changes in growing season conditions, which may impact agriculture surrounding the town. Like all communities, Windsor will need to plan for a wider variety of natural hazards and hazards that will likely be more severe.

### *Drought*

Severe drought conditions and other threats to local and regional water supplies will pose increasing challenges to meet future demand. Water costs will increase for the vineyard and wine industries. The Town's Water Conservation Program provides residents and businesses with in-depth services, education, and guidance about how to manage water wisely. The Town has shown a commitment to identifying where improvements to water efficiency can be made, but droughts like the one California is currently facing pose dangers to the Town's long-term water security.

## **Opportunities**

### *Climate Action 2020*

The Town is leading by example by participating in the Regional Climate Protection Authority's Climate Action 2020 initiative. Climate Action 2020 is a collaborative effort among the cities of Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Sonoma, the Town of Windsor, and the County of Sonoma to take a regional approach in reducing GHG emissions. Participating communities are working with residents, community stakeholders, and local experts to create Community Climate Action Plans. The GHG reductions from these plans will provide wide-ranging local benefits by decreasing air pollution, reducing energy expenditures, saving money for local governments, and reducing Windsor's impact to global climate change. Participating jurisdictions are expected to adopt the Climate Action Plan by Spring 2016.

### *Climate Change Adaptation*

Climate change adaptation refers to efforts to prepare for or adjust to the effects of climate change. These adjustments can be protective, but often provide a net economic, social, or environmental benefit regardless of what level of climate change occurs. By identifying potential climate change impacts to major sectors in Windsor, the Town can identify where it is most vulnerable. It can then establish preparedness goals and measures, and monitor and mitigate climate change impacts.

### *Resilience Planning*

Community resilience is a measure of the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from natural and manmade disasters and other



adverse situations. Resilient communities have the necessary tools to confront a range of challenges that impact the Town, its residents, and businesses from climate instability, to rising energy costs, and to economic recession. The General Plan is an opportunity to reinforce the existing infrastructure, institutions, policies, practices, and other tools that support the Town's ability to respond to these threats.

## Health and Wellness

### Assets

#### *Windsor Wellness Partnership*

As the first regional chapter of Sonoma County Health Action (i.e., a framework for a community engagement effort to get people involved in creating a healthier Sonoma County), the goal of the Windsor Wellness Partnership (i.e., an organization that wellness in the Windsor community) is to help Windsor become the healthiest community in California by 2020. The Partnership seeks to promote and sustain wellness in the Windsor community by collaborating with local and regional agencies, individuals, families, students, and seniors. The Partnership, in conjunction with Sonoma County Health Action, released the Windsor Healthcare Assessment Project in 2010. The report identified gaps in and barriers to healthcare for Windsor residents, including limited physicians, high costs, and a lack of nearby services. These findings informed a list of health recommendations that could be used by community organizations, healthcare providers, and the Town to address local priority health goals, address key determinants of health, and measure health improvements over time. These recommendations include making healthcare a communitywide priority, leveraging affiliations, focusing on prevention, and promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles.

#### *Low Crime Rate*

Historically, Windsor has had a low crime rate, which gives residents a sense of safety and builds community cohesion. Windsor's violent crime rates and property crime rates have declined since 2009. From 2009 to 2012, Windsor's violent crime rate decreased by 18 percent and property crime rates decreased by 15 percent. Low crime rates have direct positive effects on property values, but many of the benefits are indirect; low crime rates can facilitate more active living (such as walking and bicycling), and improve mental health by lowering stress.

#### *Community Garden*

The Town Green Community Garden has provided healthy local food and spurred social interaction and community building. The garden began in May 2010 and has grown in size and popularity since that time. Any Windsor resident can rent one of the community garden spaces. As one might expect, community gardeners and their children tend to eat healthier, more nutrient-rich diets. Community gardens can bring the community together and foster the development of a community identity and spirit. They also provide mental health benefits and contribute to better air quality, and in some cases, higher property values.



## Issues

### *Windsor is Underserved by Health Service Providers*

Windsor is underserved by medical practitioners. There aren't enough full-time private practice physicians in Windsor, so residents must travel to either Healdsburg or Santa Rosa for a hospital. The shortage of healthcare services affects the quality of life of residents who rely on medical services delivered in Town. The North Sonoma County Healthcare District is trying to address the shortage of doctors in Windsor, but Windsor may also benefit from emphasizing healthcare as a high priority in its economic development policies as a means of promoting the industry as a whole. Windsor does have several high quality clinics and pharmacies, including a unique compounding pharmacy downtown near the Green. The new Sutter Regional Hospital to the south, is reaching out to attract Windsor residents.

### *Aging Population*

While noted earlier in this report that Windsor has a high percentage of children and young adults, at the same time, Windsor's population is aging. The middle age population has increased from 20 percent of total population to over 27 percent since 2000. This trend is expected to continue as baby boomers continue to age and become seniors. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the aging population is expected to result in as much as a 25 percent increase in health care costs by 2030. An aging population may also present changing health care workforce needs, including reduced demand for pregnancy, infertility, and newborn care services, but higher demand for geriatric health specialists, as well as home-based health care products and systems. Older residents will also increase demand for senior housing with universal design features that increase accessibility, usability, and safety.

## Opportunities

### *Incorporate Health in all Policies*

As Windsor updates its General Plan, it has an opportunity to focus on addressing community health in its policies. By developing and implementing its policies through the lens of healthy communities (i.e., a community in which all residents are able to live a healthy lifestyle), the Town can better plan for the improved health and quality of life of its residents. The General Plan Update can also highlight community health disparities and target the issues of greatest need. Town decisions have important health-related consequences for residents. For example, not requiring sidewalks in subdivisions can lead to a reduction in physical activity. The Windsor Healthcare Assessment Project includes over 20 recommendations that could be incorporated into the General Plan.

### *Promote Healthy Foods and Active Living*

Windsor can improve the health of residents by promoting physical activity and healthy eating. The importance of proper nutrition and physical activity in reducing rates of disease and death from chronic diseases has been well documented. A majority of Americans do not eat enough



fruit and vegetables and consume too much saturated fat. The Town may consider changes to land use policy and providing incentives to encourage grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens. Physically inactive people are almost twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease as people who engage in physical activity. The Town can encourage physical activity through active design and improving access to key destinations such as the Town Green which hosts the Farmer's Market, parks, workplaces, shops, and recreational facilities. Additional Farmer's Markets could be added in other locations within Town, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods.

### *Incorporate Health in New Developments*

Active design is a building and site design strategy that uses the layout and architecture of development to encourage stair climbing, walking, bicycling, transit use, active recreation, and healthy living. It is a framework for creating urban spaces, buildings, and interiors that promote good health. Windsor can encourage active design within its urban fabric by educating developers on healthy project principles. Windsor can also plan neighborhoods, streets, and outdoor spaces that encourage exercise, play, and active transportation through policies in the General Plan. Windsor is well on its way to encouraging active living through the development of mixed-use neighborhoods, but can further these benefits by improving access to transit, parks, recreational facilities, fresh produce, and bicycle facilities. By incorporating health into the development review process, Windsor could foster a new generation of healthy development projects.

### *Track Health Indicators*

Windsor can continue to promote healthy living by better understanding the health issues of residents through the use of health indicators. Health indicators measure performance against health outcomes and reductions in health inequalities. The County of Sonoma Human Development Department released, "A Portrait of Sonoma County," which measures health in Sonoma County residents across a range of indicators. Windsor could build on this report by continuing to track the report indicators for its residents and use the data to inform future action.

## **Hazards and Safety**

### **Assets**

#### *Countywide Hazard Mitigation Plan*

The Town of Windsor adopted an Annex to the Association of Bay Area Governments Local Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2011. The Plan identifies high hazard areas and assesses vulnerabilities from earthquakes, floods, wildland fires, and landslides. The plan also identifies mitigation strategies Windsor can use to reduce the level of injury, property loss, and community disruption resulting from such hazards. The plan provides measures that Windsor will take to lower the hazard risk to property and life. The Town will be updating its Annex to the Plan in 2016.



## Issues

### *Earthquake Risk*

As was made apparent by the 2014 earthquake in Napa County, Windsor is susceptible to extreme levels of earthquake shaking activity. Three major active faults in the Sonoma County region have the potential to affect Windsor: the San Andreas, Healdsburg-Rodgers Creek, and Mayacama Faults. Each of these faults has generated earthquakes in the last 200 years. Since the Healdsburg fault is within the eastern boundaries of Windsor, the town could experience stronger earthquake shaking than areas further from the faults.

### *Flood/Dam Inundation Risk*

Sonoma County has a long history of flooding problems, particularly along the Russian River. The frequency of flooding in Sonoma County far exceeds that of any other hazard. In the last 20 years the county has experienced eight storm/flood events resulting in both State and Federal disaster declarations and activations of the Sonoma County/Operational Area Emergency Operations Center. Within the Town Limits, FEMA designates the Windsor and Pool Creek corridors as 100-year flood zones. Windsor is also within the dam failure inundation hazard area of the Warm Springs Dam, which is located 17 miles to the northwest of the town. The Warm Springs Dam and the reservoirs within Foothills Regional Park could result in widespread flooding in Windsor in the event of dam failure.

### *Aviation Safety Hazards*

The Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport, which is located immediately south of Windsor, currently covers approximately 1,048 acres and includes two runways. Between 1962 and 2011 there were 35 aircraft accidents associated with the airport. Of this total, 26 accidents occurred on the airport property and nine were off airport property. The airport recently completed runway extensions that may expand noise contours and overflight zones into Town limits. Future expansion of the airport could increase noise and safety concerns for nearby residents and constrain future development along the southern edge of the town. Residential and non-residential land uses can occur in these areas, but the closer the proposed development is to Airport operations, the greater the density restrictions and prohibitions of certain land uses.

### *Noise Nuisance*

Noise generated by vehicle traffic, airport operations, and trains may have significant impacts in certain areas of Windsor. Roadway traffic, especially along Highway 101, Old Redwood Highway, Shiloh Road, Windsor River Road, and Hembree Lane, is the most significant source of noise affecting residents and businesses near these corridors. The Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport is another primary noise source in Windsor. Finally, freight railroad operations are a substantial source of noise for those residents adjacent to the railroad tracks. Future noise impacts from the railroad may increase when SMART service begins.



### *Agricultural Impacts*

As a community located in an active agricultural production area, agricultural chemicals, such as pesticides and fertilizers, pose risks to adjacent residential land uses. The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office receives approximately 40 pesticide-related complaints annually. However, about half are from nearby residents affected by agricultural spraying and the other half from those driving by on roadways adjacent to spraying activities. Windsor's Zoning Ordinance requires that residential property lines must be at least 100 feet from field crops and 200 feet from active vineyards and orchards.

## **Opportunities**

### *Emergency Preparedness*

Emergency Preparedness is the discipline of anticipating and responding to both natural and manmade disasters through mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The General Plan Update is an opportunity to further prepare the Town of Windsor and its residents and businesses to deal with future hazards. The Town can include policies and programs that reflect the current understanding of how to best manage and mitigate damages from hazards. Policies and programs can reduce the physical risks associated with hazards and help guide local emergency response needs. The Town can also include policies aimed at increasing public awareness as a means of better preparing residents for emergencies.

### *Airport Land Use Plan*

The Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan (CALUP) for Sonoma County, adopted in 2001, describes noise and safety compatibility standards associated with development in the vicinity of airports. The CALUP provides mechanisms to ensure land use compatibility around Sonoma County airports. The General Plan Update process is an opportunity to incorporate the land use policies and standards found in the CALUP into the General Plan in an effort to mitigate potential airport-related noise and safety impacts in the south part of Windsor.

### *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a set of techniques and design considerations that reduce the potential for crime. CPTED strategies rely upon influencing potential offender decisions that precede criminal acts. CPTED concepts focus on physical design of development to deter criminal activity. CPTED principles range from the small-scale (e.g., the strategic use of shrubbery and other vegetation) to the larger-scale, including building form and placement to increase "eyes on the street." CPTED is an opportunity for the Town to use the development review process to reduce crime in the town. While the Town has done a good job of incorporating CPTED concepts into project designs through its regulations, design guidelines, and review processes, it could ensure CPTED is addressed by used a checklist of CPTED techniques and design considerations during the development review process.



## Schools and Education

### Assets

#### *Well-Managed School District and Great Educational Programming*

There is a general sense that Windsor's public schools are well-managed and provide a great education for local youth. Historically, the school system has been a key reason people move to Windsor and is part of why many feel the town is family-oriented. Windsor has had a higher Academic Performance Index (API) than the California average seven out of the last eight years. In addition, the District's graduation rate of 82 percent is above the national average of 81 percent. According to the California Department of Education, 54 percent of high school graduates in Windsor enrolled in postsecondary institutions compared to the countywide average of 57 percent. The School District uses the Oklahoma Model system, which clusters students of similar ages and grade levels on a single campus. This system brings students together from across the entire town.

### Issues

#### *Location of the Next School*

The School District anticipates that it will need to build a new school in the next five years to meet a growing student body. The new school site could geographically balance school populations to the east/west of Highway 101. Residents feel too many students attend schools on the west side of Highway 101, resulting in heavy congestion during school drop-off times. Ideally, the new school will also be adjacent to a park with recreation facilities. Windsor Creek Elementary School, on the west side of Windsor, is one potential location for an expanded school, but the surrounding development presents access issues. The School District will need to work with the Town to site the new school in a way that increases community cohesion and reduces congestion.

### Opportunities

#### *Jointly Plan the Location of the Next School*

The General Plan Update is an opportunity for the Town and the School District to work together to identify future school sites. By collaborating with the Town, the District can plan for new schools in locations that are consistent with the Town's expectations for conservation, mobility, and connectivity.

#### *Expand Joint Facility Use*

Residents believe that Windsor would benefit from expanding the joint use of School District and Town facilities that address the education needs of students and the community's need for social, recreation, and civic spaces. Harnessing joint use and development strategies to achieve mutually-beneficial development or programming is a great opportunity for the District and Windsor. Both District and Town stakeholders indicated an interest in working together to more



clearly outline and organize joint use facilities for parks, auditoriums, and recreation facilities. Both agencies could benefit from sharing resources and staff for facility maintenance. And, the Town could rely on open space areas, sports fields, and playgrounds at schools to meet its park standards.

## **Infrastructure and Services**

### **Assets**

#### *Contract Services*

Windsor obtains some services through contracts with other agencies. The Windsor Police Department is staffed by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office employees under a negotiated contract between the County and the Town. The Windsor Fire Protection District, a separate entity from the Town that serves the Town of Windsor and a part of unincorporated Sonoma County, provides fire protection and emergency medical services. The Town purchases supplemental water from the Sonoma County Water Agency. The Town provides grant funding to non-profit organizations which provide social services to the community generally at a cost lower than the Town could provide those same services. The Town benefits financially and organizationally from contracting for services instead of providing them directly. As a result, the Town can narrow its focus and its resources on providing other critical community services at a higher level.

#### *High-Quality Emergency Services*

Safety and emergency services agencies provide high-quality service to Windsor. Excellent emergency services are critical to ensure residents feel safe. A safe community also attracts families and contributes to the image of a family-friendly community. In 2012, the Windsor Police Department's average response time for top priority emergency calls was just over five minutes; the acceptable response range is 6-8 minutes. Windsor's violent crime rates and property crime rates have declined since 2009. From 2009 to 2012, Windsor's violent crime rate decreased by 18 percent and property crime rates decreased by 15 percent. The Windsor Fire Protection District also does an excellent job responding to emergencies. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines for fire response is nine minutes at least 90 percent of the time in urban areas and 14 minutes at least 80 percent of the time in rural areas, with response time measured from the 911 call time to the arrival time of the first responder at the scene. WFPD meets or exceeds the recommendations of the NFPA, and has an average response time for all calls, including fire, medical, and hazard condition calls, of just under five minutes.

#### *Water Conservation Efforts/Low Impact Development*

The Town has a comprehensive set of water conservation programs that focus on residential and commercial water conservation and recycled water use. These programs are necessary to help make Windsor resilient during drought conditions and can reduce water utility bills in the process. The Town uses recycled water to irrigate agricultural lands, recreational facilities,



schoolyards, and residential front and back yards in some subdivisions. Windsor High School is perhaps the only school in the state that flushes its toilets with recycled water, supplied by the Town. The Town also runs “Windsor Efficiency PAYS,” a water conservation program that provides residential customers with water-efficient upgrades to their home. The cost of the upgrade is added to the customers’ utility bills, but the cost is typically less than the savings associated with the upgrade. In October 2014 the Town Council adopted the Low Impact Development Technical Design Manual to reduce pollutants in storm water and increase onsite storm water treatment.

#### *Wastewater Treatment Reclamation Disposal Facility*

The Windsor Wastewater Treatment Plant treats and processes the town’s sewage and drainage runoff. The plant includes 74 acres of land and operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week. In addition, the plant staffs six full-time employees who maintain the collection and recycled water distribution system. Treated water is recycled and reused to irrigate parks and open spaces in town and on adjacent farmland. Some water is discharged into groundwater that flows under the Russian River and freshwater wetlands adjacent to the Town of Windsor. As a last resort water is discharged into Mark West Creek. The plant has a maximum dry-day capacity of 2.25 million gallons per day (MGD) and a wet-weather design flow capacity of 7.2 MGD. Currently (2014), the plant treats an average of 1.41 MGD on a typical dry day. At current growth rates, it is anticipated that treatment plant improvements will need to be completed and on-line by 2020. Improvements would include a fourth set of flocculation tanks, a fourth AWT clarifier, and an eighth filter. These additions would bring the overall Water Reclamation Plant dry-day capacity to 3.0 MGD.

#### *Broadband and Wireless Access/Service*

Broadband internet service is becoming an increasingly important aspect of community infrastructure, as it may promote social and economic development as well as human and technological capacity building. A community that is well-served with widespread access can foster participation in emerging economic sectors dependent upon high speed internet access. Broadband internet networks are now viewed as basic infrastructure and there is a public interest for communities to ensure that their residents and businesses have appropriate access. Nearly all (99.9 percent) of Windsor’s population has access to broadband DSL internet and 97.8 percent have access to cable internet. Nationwide, 88.8 percent of Americans have access to broadband DSL internet and 88.0 percent have access to cable internet. In addition, the Town provides free wireless networks within most Town facilities including Town Hall, Civic Center, Corporation Yard, Senior Center, and Community Center. The Town’s wireless network is mainly used for municipal operations including the use of wireless devices (e.g., tablets, laptops, cell phones) by the Town Council and Planning Commission as part of the paperless agenda systems employed by Town staff as well as for parks programming, such as computer classes offered at the Senior Center.



## Issues

### *Water System Capacity and Supply*

Adequate, long-term water supply is essential to the town. The Russian River Well Field is Windsor's water source; supplemental water is purchased from the Sonoma County Water Agency. The available average supply is 5.60 million gallons of water per day (MGD). Although this production meets current (2014) needs, which on average is 5.13 MGD, demand is expected to exceed available supply around 2020. In addition, supplies are insufficient during maximum day demand conditions starting in 2015. After 2015 the deficiency will grow if additional supplies are not brought on-line. The Town has identified projects that are needed to ensure Windsor's water supply in its Water Master Plan. If all of the projects are completed, the Town will have adequate supplies for future population growth.

### *Fire/Police Service Ratios*

Fire and Police Service Ratios are metrics that help determine if a community has sufficient fire and police personnel. The Police Department has a ratio of 0.74 sworn positions per 1,000 residents, which is less than 1.8, the nationwide average for municipalities of Windsor's size. The town is served by two fire districts (Windsor and Rincon Valley), and together the two districts respond to an average of 200 service calls per month in Windsor. The Fire Districts maintain a ratio of 0.16 firefighters per 1,000 residents within town limits, and approximately 0.13 firefighters per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated areas of the Districts. These ratios are below the national average of 1.7 firefighters per 1,000 residents. While staffing ratios appear low when compared to national averages, Windsor's police and fire service providers meet or exceed any guidelines or national averages for response times, and Windsor's crime rates have declined since 2009.

### *Parks Acreage Ratio*

Public parks provide many amenities and benefits to Windsor residents. They serve as social gathering spaces, have recreational facilities, beautify neighborhoods, and provide habitat for plant and animal species. A quality, expansive park system can also bolster a community's family-friendly image and attract new residents. Many communities, including Windsor, set a standard ratio of park acreage to population to ensure the community has enough park land to serve its residents. The Windsor Municipal Code establishes the Town's standard of five acres of park area per thousand residents. This standard is further defined as three acres of community parks per one thousand residents and two acres of neighborhood parks per one thousand residents. Based on this standard, Windsor should have 135.5 acres of parkland; however, the town has 109.8 total acres of parkland (67.5 acres of community and 42.3 acres of neighborhood parks). Based on a projected 2040 population of 33,600, Windsor will need a total of 168 acres of parkland by 2040 (100.8 acres of community parks and 67.2 acres of neighborhood parks). This is 58.2 acres more than the current (2014) park acreage.



## Opportunities

### *Community Swimming Pool Facility*

Windsor currently operates a small community pool on the Senior Center grounds. Children use it for swim lessons and the Town has family swim nights. Residents overwhelmingly feel that the existing swimming pool is too small, is targeted to senior use, and a new facility could better serve a growing community now and in the future. In January 2015, the Lytton Band of Pomo Indians proposed a plan to build an aquatics complex at Keiser Community Park that would include a 30-meter competition pool and a large recreation pool with a water slide. The aquatics complex could also include a snack bar, picnic tables, barbeques, and a community room. The Tribe has offered to provide the aquatics center (estimated cost: \$9-11 million) if voters approve an extension of utilities to the proposed 147-unit tribal housing development off of Windsor River Road. The potential cost of future ongoing operations and maintenance of the proposed pool facility is a major concern.

### *New Park and Recreation Facilities*

Windsor needs to consider new park facilities to serve the needs of existing and future residents. Park facilities should meet the needs of residents of all ages, abilities, and interests. A robust parks and recreation system can help residents achieve their health and wellness goals and bolster the Town's image as a healthy place to live. The Town is in the process of updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As a part of the community outreach associated with the plan update, planners have asked residents about the parks and recreation facilities they would like to see built or upgraded in Windsor. Planners interviewed Town Council Members, conducted a phone survey, and held workshops for the community, staff, Spanish-speaking resident, and teens. Every group surveyed believed Windsor needs an aquatics center. In addition, every group agreed that Windsor needs a new multi-use recreation center to replace the aging Huerta Gymnasium. Nearly all groups were interested in new trails and paths, more park restrooms, and more dog parks. Above all, residents surveyed wanted more communitywide events held in parks, such as the events held on the Town Green.