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FINAL REPORT

CITY OF SONOMA MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Prepared for:

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the State Legislature convened a special commission to study and make recommendations to address California's rapidly accelerating growth. The Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century focused energies on ways to empower the already existing Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) in California's counties. The Commission's final report, *Growth within Bounds*, recommended various changes to local land use laws and LAFCO statutes. Assembly Speaker Robert Hertzberg encompassed the recommendations of the Commission in Assembly Bill 2838, which passed into the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. The new law endows LAFCO with more responsibilities and more influence to oversee growth in California.

One of the major new responsibilities of LAFCO is to conduct comprehensive, regional studies of municipal services (Municipal Service Reviews, or MSRs) in conjunction with reviews of city and district spheres of influence (SOIs). LAFCOs are directed to review and update agencies' SOIs, as necessary, every five years, according to Government Code Section 56425. Section 56430 requires MSRs to be conducted prior to or in conjunction with the sphere updates. MSRs must address at least the following nine factors:

1. Infrastructure needs or deficiencies
2. Growth and population projections for the affected area
3. Financing constraints and opportunities
4. Cost avoidance opportunities
5. Opportunities for rate restructuring
6. Opportunities for shared facilities
7. Government structure options, including advantages and disadvantages or consolidation or reorganization of service providers
8. Evaluation of management efficiencies
9. Local accountability and governance

Sonoma LAFCO retained Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS) to develop the MSRs for cities and special districts in Sonoma County. The process was split into phases: water and sewer service providers and fire protection providers were reviewed in the first two phases, and cities are studied in the third, and final, phase. An initial survey was mailed to each City with a request for documents such as general plans, budgets, and maps. EPS used the completed surveys and supporting documents to write provider profiles and the nine determinations required by law for each provider. The profiles and determinations were submitted to each city for its review. The cities' comments were then incorporated into the report.

II. SUMMARY OF SERVICE ISSUES AND TRENDS

CITY OF SONOMA GOVERNANCE

The City of Sonoma is a General Law city formed in 1883. It operates under the Council/Manager form of government and has 58 full-time and approximately 51 part-time employees. An elected City Council oversees all municipal operations. The five members of the Council are elected to overlapping four-year terms and are responsible for providing policy and legislative leadership; public City Council meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in council chambers.¹ Council members do not receive pay, but are eligible for a benefit package.² The City Manager serves as the chief executive officer of the City, providing management and direction for all City programs and administration. Specific City Manager responsibilities include preparing City budgets and City Council agendas, analyzing legislation, providing intergovernmental representation, and implementing City Council policies.³

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Sonoma has a population of 9,834 in an area of 2.2 square miles.⁴ According to ABAG projections cited in the City's General Plan, the City is expected to grow from 9,128 in 2000 to 10,800 in 2020, or 0.9 percent annually. The population of the City and its SOI is projected to go from 9,754 in 2000 to 13,000 in 2020, an average annual growth rate of 1.7 percent.⁵ The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department projects somewhat more rapid growth for the entire Sonoma Urban Service Area, which is expected to have a population of 14,590 by 2020, representing an annual increase of nearly 2.5 percent between 2000 and 2020.⁶

The City of Sonoma has established a number of policies intended to manage growth. The 1995 General Plan established an SOI covering an area of 363 acres, 62 percent less than the SOI laid out in the 1985 Plan; this reduction was designed to limit urban expansion, particularly into hillside areas. Within the City, the Sonoma Growth Management Ordinance, adopted in 1980 and amended in 2005, limits growth to an average of 88 units per year. The City also has an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), adopted in 2000 and intended to preserve Sonoma's small-town character by concentrating development in areas already served by urban services.⁷

¹ City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/index.shtml>>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2004.

² LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

³ City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/index.shtml>>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2004.

⁴ Department of Finance 2005.

⁵ ABAG 2003 Projections, cited in Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 27.

⁶ Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>>.

⁷ Sonoma 1995 – 2005 General Plan, 4 – 8.

The City is in the process of updating its General Plan, which was last updated in 1995. Two components of the Plan, the Housing Element Update and the Background Report, were completed in 2004. Other projects undertaken by the Planning Department in recent years include an update of the Sign Ordinance, the creation of a unified development code, and area planning studies. The City's current Capital Improvement Program extends through 2009, and is updated annually.⁸

No annexations, reorganizations, or expansions that will affect service provision are currently anticipated.

SERVICES

The City of Sonoma is a comprehensive municipal service provider with the following departments:

- Administration (including City Clerk, Finance, and Cemetery Sales⁹)
- Building
- Fire
- Police
- Planning
- Public Works (including City Engineer)

Public K-12 education is provided for students living in the City of Sonoma by the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. The School District operates five elementary schools (grades K-5), two middle schools (grades 6-8), two high schools (grades 9-12), and a continuation school (grades 7-10). Of these, two of the elementary schools, one of the middle schools, and Sonoma Valley High are located within Sonoma City limits. The School District also runs the Sonoma Valley Adult School and the Sonoma Charter School. Currently only one of these schools is operating above its planned enrollment capacity.¹⁰ Sonoma State University, part of the California State University system, and Santa Rosa Junior College are located in Sonoma County and offer higher education opportunities.

Table 1 details the provision of services in the City of Sonoma. **Figure 1** provides an overview of cities in Sonoma County. **Figure 2** provides a map of the City of Sonoma.

⁸ LAFCO Request for Information, 2003 and City of Sonoma & Community Development Agency Two-Year Budget FY 2003-04/2004-05.

⁹ The City of Sonoma operates three cemeteries under an enterprise fund; cemetery sales are administered by City Administration and field operations are run through the Public Works Department. (Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.)

¹⁰ Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 37.

**Table 1
Municipal Service Providers for the City of Sonoma
County of Sonoma Municipal Service Reviews**

Municipal Service	Service Provider
General Government	
Governing Board	City Council
Manager	City of Sonoma
Attorney	City of Sonoma
Finance/Clerk/Administrative Services	City of Sonoma
Public Protection	
Traffic Control/Accident Investigation	City of Sonoma/Contract with Sonoma County Sheriff
Law Enforcement	City of Sonoma/Contract with Sonoma County Sheriff
Fire Protection	City of Sonoma
Animal Control	City of Sonoma/Contract with Sonoma County Sheriff
Land Use and Planning	
Regulation & Planning	City of Sonoma
Building Inspection	City of Sonoma
City Engineering	City of Sonoma
Community Services	
Local Parks/Recreation Facilities	City of Sonoma
Library	Sonoma Valley Regional Library (Sonoma County)
Public Works	
Roads, Local Drainage, Bridges, Signals	City of Sonoma
Domestic Water	City of Sonoma
Wastewater Treatment/Disposal	Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District
Solid Waste Management/Disposal	City of Sonoma
Flood Control	City of Sonoma
Street Lighting	City of Sonoma
Street Tree Maintenance	City of Sonoma
Public Education	
K-12 Grade Levels	Sonoma Valley Unified School District
College	Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa Junior College
Other Services	

Figure 1
Sonoma County Administrative Area Boundaries

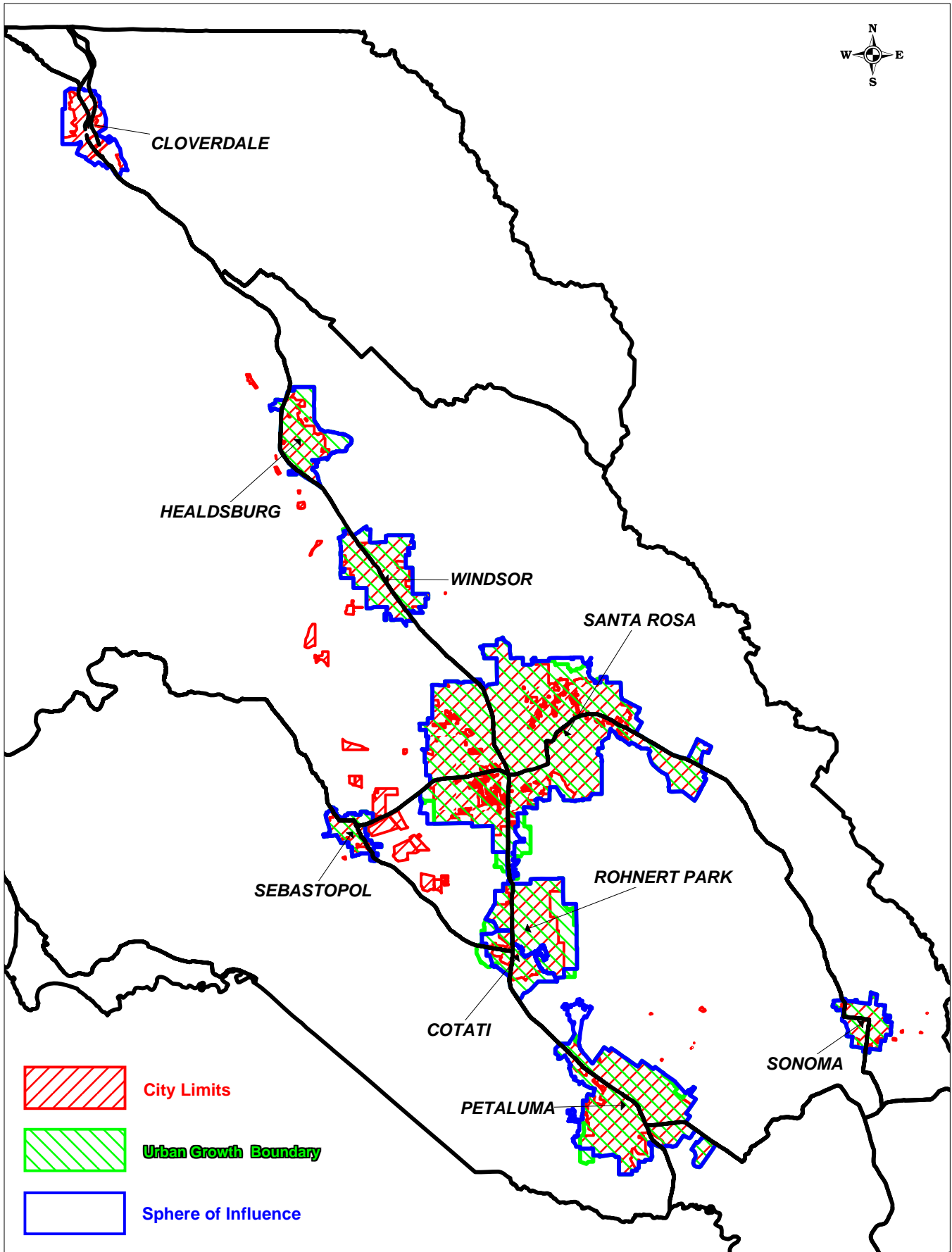
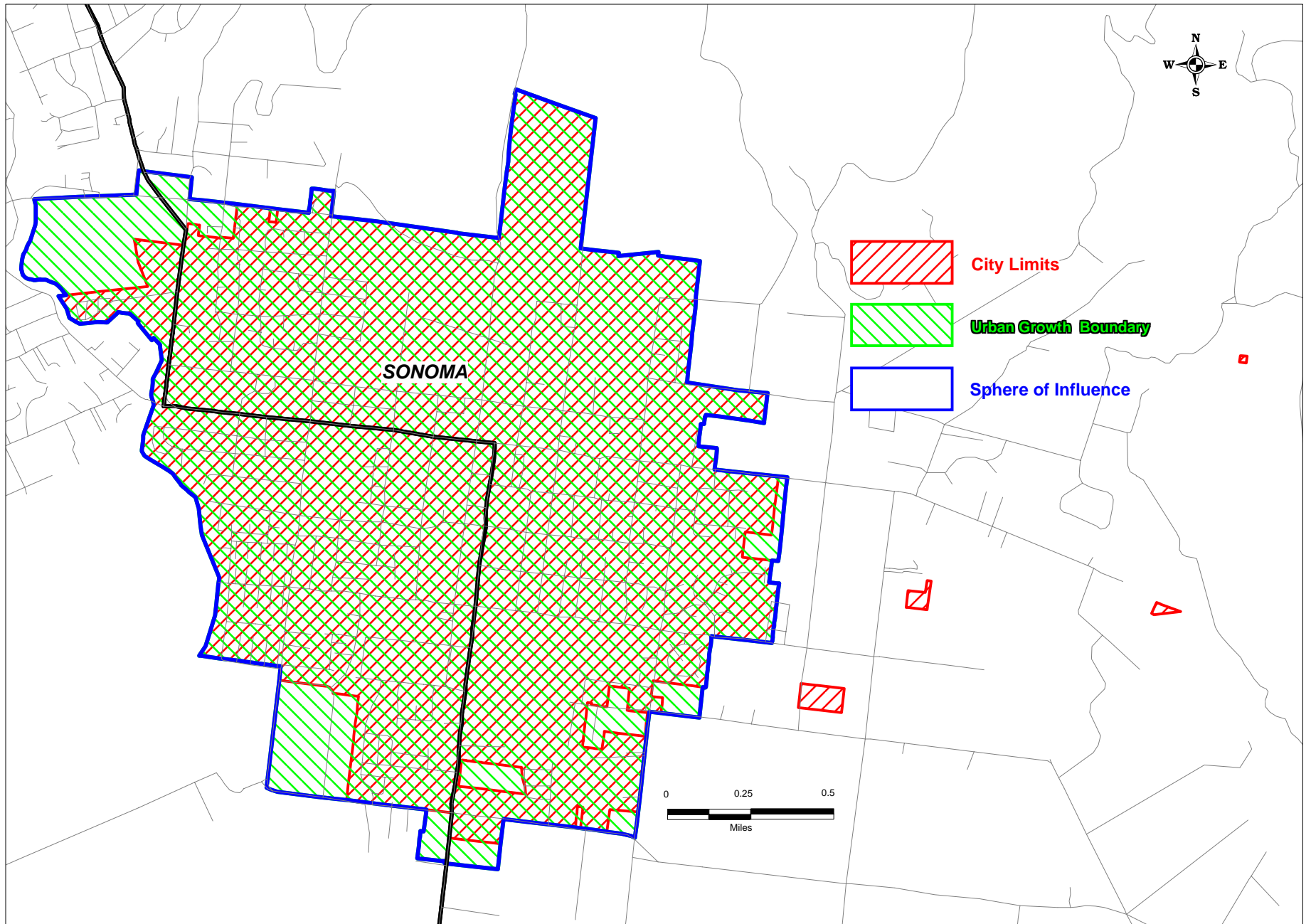


Figure 2
City of Sonoma



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III. WATER

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Water distribution for the City of Sonoma is managed by a division of the Public Works Department. The water system is operated and maintained by a FY 05-06 staff of 7.5 allocated positions.¹¹

Water rates were recently converted to a tiered structure to encourage water conservation. Charges for an average single-family home are a \$19.18 bimonthly service charge, plus \$2.39 per 1,000 gallons for the first 6,000 gallons and \$3.59 per 1,000 gallons for up to 36,000 gallons. These rates are reviewed each year to assure that system revenues will support system expenses.¹² Manufacturing, commercial, and irrigation users are charged higher commodity rates but municipal users, such as government agencies, schools and certain nonprofits, are charged a lower rate.

The total Water Utility budget for FY 05-06 is \$5.0 million, including \$605,000 in employee expenses, \$2.0 million in services, supplies, operations and maintenance, \$1.8 million in capital expenses and project expenses, and \$500,000 in debt service and transfers. The majority of Water Utility funding comes from water sales and service fees.¹³ After operations and maintenance costs and depreciation, remaining revenues from the water utility account are transferred to the water capital improvement fund. The capital improvement fund's only other source of revenue is interest. Water rates and charges are designed to provide an adequate amount of revenue.

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Primary components of the City's water distribution system include 49 miles of water mains, 4,100 service connections, 6 storage tanks, 7 wells (two on standby), 2 pumping stations, approximately 430 fire hydrants, and 3 standby emergency generators. In addition to maintenance and repair activities, water utility personnel monitor water levels in the City's storage tanks, operate City wells, sample the wells and distribution system for laboratory analysis, install new service connections to meters, read customer meters for billing, and provide customer service.¹⁴

The majority of Sonoma's potable water is purchased through a contract with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), with an average delivery rate of 2.5 million gallons per day (mgd) in the winter and 4.5 to 5 mgd in the summer.¹⁵ SCWA water is

¹¹ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

¹² Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005.

¹³ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

¹⁴ City of Sonoma, Two-Year Budget, FY 03-04/ FY 04-05, 117.

¹⁵ Interview with Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005. Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

drawn from gravel beds along the Russian River and delivered to Sonoma via the Sonoma Aqueduct, which is also used by the Valley of the Moon Water District. The SCWA is currently constructing a parallel aqueduct to increase reliability of water delivery in high use summer months.

Additional water is supplied by a system of City-owned groundwater wells.¹⁶ The City's seven wells have a maximum capacity of 1.25 million gallons per day and a sustained capacity of 0.8 million gallons per day, for use as emergency supplemental supply for high-use days or impairment in SCWA delivery.¹⁷

City storage tanks have a current capacity of 5.55 million gallons, which falls within State recommendations for water storage capacity. With an additional 10 million gallons expected to remain available in local SCWA tanks, the City will be able to maintain at least one day of emergency reserve storage at all times (with ten days of reserves available under most circumstances). The City states that this reserve capacity is adequate to meet demand and provide sufficient backup supply, consistent with State standards.¹⁸

Several upgrades to the water system's facilities and equipment have improved service levels and expanded capacity. In 2001, a new tank (the Norrbom Road Tank) and pump station and improved water mains in the Cobblestone Hill area increased system-wide storage capacity by 3 million gallons. A total of 3,400 feet of new 12-inch mains was added to the system, improving distribution.¹⁹ In addition, the Public Works Department performs ongoing maintenance and repair of valves, meters, and service lines throughout the system.²⁰

The City is also working on a number of technology advancements to decrease water loss and increase revenue. As of October 2005, Sonoma is approximately three-quarters of the way through a meter replacement program for commercial and residential accounts throughout the City.²¹ New meter technologies include a radio-read technology that reduces staff time and costs and e-coder meters, which retain water usage data for up to 60 days so meters only have to be read bi-monthly. These meters also have the capability to alert City staff to leaks, which can help homeowners save money.²² The City is also working to develop new Water Conservation Programs for each fiscal year.

¹⁶ Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 38.

¹⁷ Interview with Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005. Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

¹⁸ Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 39. Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005.

¹⁹ Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

²⁰ Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

²¹ Interview, Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005. Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

²² Interview with Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005.

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The City of Sonoma commissioned a 1999 Water System Improvement Study by Brelje and Race Consulting Engineers of Santa Rosa, with supplemental analysis performed in 2003. In accordance with the recommendations of these studies, the City is in the process of rehabilitating its groundwater wells to help ensure that future demand will be met. This ongoing project will not increase capacity but will improve reliability.²³ The City has also increased its storage capacity levels to beyond the report's recommendations, and expects that existing storage capacity will remain adequate through 2015.²⁴

The engineering analysis also concluded that a Water Agency project to increase Sonoma Aqueduct capacity by 2007 could accommodate additional growth in the service area until 2018. This project is currently under construction.²⁵

The growth projections underlying this conclusion have since been updated and significantly increased; the City's water demand projections now assume construction of 88 new units annually within the UGB through 2018.²⁶ The City's Background Report for the General Plan Update states that the City's current capacity can satisfy maximum day demands through 2008, but that an additional 1.06 million gallons per day of supply would be required to accommodate growth through 2018. (This estimated need has not changed significantly since the Background Report was written.²⁷) According to the 2003 Brelje and Race engineering study, activating Well No. 3 could provide up to five years of added supply before additional County water would be needed if the aqueduct project is delayed. According to the Background Report for the City's General Plan

Update, SWCA plans to construct additional pipelines between 2011 and 2026, which will make it possible for the Agency to deliver Sonoma's full entitlement of 6.3 million gallons per day.²⁸

²³ Interview with Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005.

²⁴ Interview with Randy Cover, Water Operations Supervisor, 5 Jan. 2005.

²⁵ Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

²⁶ Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005.

²⁷ Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

²⁸ Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 39. Interview with Al Bandur, Public Works Administrator, 27 Oct. 2005.

IV. WASTEWATER

The SCWA provides wastewater treatment service to the City of Sonoma and many adjacent unincorporated areas of the county. Together, these areas comprise the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, which covers approximately 4,700 acres from Glen Ellen to the communities surrounding Sonoma. The City of Sonoma accounts for about half of the residential sewer demand in the sanitation district.²⁹

Reprinted below is the section about the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, contained in the Municipal Services Reviews of Water and Sewer Providers (November 2004). It has been updated as of November 2005.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (SVCSD) was formed in 1977 to collect and treat wastewater. Management of the system was transferred to the SCWA in 1995. Two Sonoma County Supervisors and the Mayor of the City of Sonoma serve as the District's Board of Directors. SCWA personnel operate the facilities and charge time based on actual hours spent on SVCSD work. Critical points of the treatment facility are connected to the Agency's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system, which allows for real-time data acquisition and remote monitoring.

Operations are funded primarily through user fees and charges. The District charges a sewer connection fee of \$9,483 and an annual flat sewer service charge of \$518 per single-family dwelling.

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The SVCSD provides sanitation services to an area of 5,700 acres and a population of approximately 35,000, or 16,513 Equivalent Single Dwelling Units (ESDs).³⁰ Sonoma Valley communities served include the City of Sonoma and the unincorporated communities and subdivisions of Glen Ellen, Eldridge, Agua Caliente, Fetters Hot Springs, Boyes Hot Springs, El Verano, Temelec, Vineburg, and Schellville.

The wastewater treatment facility is located at 22675-8th Street in Sonoma. The SVCSD also operates two lift stations. Between November 1 and April 30 of each year, recycled wastewater is discharged into the Schell Slough. From May 1 to October 31 annually,

²⁹ "City households account for about half of the residential sewer demand in the sanitation zone: Water Agency data from 2000 show 8,266 Sonoma Valley homes with sewer service, while Census 2000 lists 4,632 housing units in the City." Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 40.

³⁰ "Equivalent Single Dwelling Units" include both residential and commercial customers. ESDs are a method to equate services to commercial customers to the equivalent number of residential units. Interview with Jim Zambenini, 21 Oct. 2005.

recycled water is used for irrigation by a local dairy and vineyards and for wetlands enhancement. Within an estimated three years, a new pipeline is proposed to transfer recycled effluent north towards more irrigators and to the Sonoma Developmental Center, where a large amount of potable water can be saved.

The estimated maximum capacity of the SVCSD wastewater treatment plant is approximately 11.5 mgd, but is limited by its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit to treat and average dry weather flow of 3 mgd to secondary treatment. Current average dry weather flow is 2.85 mgd.³¹ The SVCSD has had difficulty meeting NPDES water quality requirements because of high wet weather inflows, worn out and obsolete equipment, and insufficient storage and disposal capacity.

Projects in recent years include a 90-million gallon storage reservoir to add to the previously existing 120-million gallon storage capacity for irrigators. In the next two years, the District plans to complete a \$3 million project to replace its sludge handling facilities. It is also currently seeking funds to upgrade the Sonoma Valley treatment plant to tertiary standards. It is anticipated that the collection system will need over \$40 million of work in the future.³²

In 1998, the SVCSD Board of Directors approved an urban service boundary that would prohibit annexation of new territory into the District until facility upgrades and other improvements were made, which will address requirements imposed by the Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board. Parcels annexed by the City of Sonoma are automatically served by SVCSD if they fall within District boundaries.³³

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Existing treatment and disposal facilities are anticipated to be able to serve approximately 2,000 more ESDs within the SVCSD's service boundary.³⁴ However, buildout would add about 2,400 ESDs within the unincorporated areas of the Service

³¹ Interview with Jim Zambenini, 21 Oct. 2005.

³² Interview with Jim Zambenini, 10 March 2004. Interview with Engineer Cordell Stillman, 20 Oct. 2005.

³³ Interview with Pam Jeane, SCWA Deputy Chief Engineer for Operations, 26 Oct. 2005.

³⁴ Interview with Pam Jeane, SCWA Deputy Chief Engineer for Operations, 26 Oct. 2005.

Area and 1,850 from within Sonoma City limits to the existing 16,513 ESDs.³⁵ Achieving this level of service will require increasing treatment capacity beyond current permitted levels and increasing disposal capacity by securing more irrigators. An engineering study completed in March 2004 concluded that plant treatment capacity could be increased to approximately 4.4 mgd; this would require an increase in the plant's permitted capacity.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid; City staff indicates that about 90 ESDs are actually constructed each year. Approximately 150 commercial ESDs remain to buildout.

³⁶ Interview with Kevin Booker, SCWA, 27 Oct. 2005.

V. STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Public Works Department manages operations and work programs in four divisions: Cemetery, Parks, Streets, and Water. Water services and parks maintenance are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Citywide, a total of 21.5 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) are assigned to Public Works operations. Of this total, 7.5 FTEs are assigned to water operations, 3.45 FTEs are assigned to operation of the three City cemeteries, 0.35 FTEs are assigned to building maintenance functions, and the remaining 10.2 FTEs are allocated to street and park maintenance.³⁷ An additional Maintenance Worker I position is requested for the Streets Department in the FY 05-06/ 06-07 Budget; staffing levels in the Department have not increased in over 25 years, and Department maintenance obligations have increased with the addition of new subdivisions and the growth of the City. The Department budget for FY 05-06 is \$906,000, of which over two-thirds covers employee-related expenses. An additional \$311,000 is budgeted for street maintenance under the Gas Tax Fund.³⁸

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Streets division is responsible for the maintenance of City streets and sidewalks, traffic control and street signs, and traffic control markings; weed abatement; storm drain maintenance; vandalism response; and street sweeping. The division also provides traffic control support during special events and emergencies and oversees contract tree maintenance.³⁹

A number of resurfacing and sidewalk repair projects are included in the City's current five-year Capital Improvement Program. Capital projects funded through Public Works in FY 05-06 include modification of a lighted pedestrian crosswalk at Fifth St. West, expected to result in reduced costs through the elimination of staff time required to service the existing system during inclement weather. In addition, sidewalk and traffic signal maintenance, street sweeper repair, and pavement striping and marking work are funded through the Gas Tax Fund.⁴⁰

³⁷ Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005.

³⁸ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

³⁹ City of Sonoma, Two-Year Budget, FY 03-04/ FY 04-05, 47.

⁴⁰ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Traffic Level of Service (LOS) D is the threshold for consideration of needed improvements in most areas of the City.

As part of an ongoing update of the City's General Plan, a traffic analysis has been prepared, focusing on 16 key intersections. This analysis includes counts (taken in 2003) and projections for the year 2020. The traffic counts show that 3 of the 16 intersections are operating at a less than acceptable level of service (lower than midrange LOS D) during peak p.m. conditions. By 2020, this number is expected to increase to six. In most cases, the intersections are stop-sign controlled and an acceptable level of service can be achieved through signalization.⁴¹

However, two areas present additional problems. The first is the intersection of Fifth Street West/West Napa Street. This intersection is already signalized and currently operates at a marginally acceptable level, but is expected to decline to a low LOS D. To significantly improve its operation, additional right-of-way would be required; this addition would be very costly and would result in an expansive intersection that could be viewed as out of keeping with the visual character of Sonoma.⁴²

The second problem area is the intersection of Broadway and Napa Street at the Plaza. This is a stop-sign controlled intersection that currently experiences LOS D during peak p.m. conditions. By 2020, conditions at this intersection are expected to decline to LOS F. While the signalization of this intersection would result in an acceptable level of service, the introduction of a traffic signal in front of the Plaza could have significant impacts on the visual and historic character of the downtown area.⁴³

The Planning Commission and City Council have yet to give definitive direction with regard to these two intersections; according to the City's planning administrator, it seems likely that the City may have to accept a reduced level of service at these locations.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Personal communication from Planning Administrator David Goodison, 1 Aug. 2005.

⁴² Personal communication from Planning Administrator David Goodison, 1 Aug. 2005.

⁴³ Personal communication from Planning Administrator David Goodison, 1 Aug. 2005.

⁴⁴ Personal communication from Planning Administrator David Goodison, 1 Aug. 2005.

VI. PARKS

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Public Works Department manages operations and work programs in four divisions: Cemetery, Parks, Streets, and Water. Water services and Streets maintenance are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Citywide, a total of 21.5 full time equivalent positions are assigned to Public Works operations. Of this total, 7.5 FTEs are assigned to water operations, 3.45 FTEs are assigned to operation of the three City cemeteries, 0.35 FTEs are assigned to building maintenance functions, and the remaining 10.2 FTEs are allocated to street and park maintenance.⁴⁵ The Department budget for FY 05-06 is \$906,000, of which over two thirds covers employee-related expenses.⁴⁶

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Parks division's responsibilities include lawn and playground equipment maintenance, irrigation system repair, refuse disposal, and weed abatement. The division is also responsible for activities in the City Plaza including maintenance of the rose gardens, fountain, Grinstead Amphitheatre, and fish and duck ponds; and special event preparation and follow-up. Some landscape maintenance and tree trimming and removal are performed through contract services, overseen by the Parks division.⁴⁷

In addition to ongoing basic maintenance, recent work programs have focused on initiating and implementing an "Adopt a Bike Path" program and making ongoing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to playgrounds and to twelve City parks identified in a 2002 ADA field survey. The City also worked with the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District to acquire a conservation easement on the 157-acre Montini Ranch, a portion of which is within City limits.⁴⁸

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Sonoma currently has 95.7 acres of designated parkland, not included the Montini property or local state-run park areas.⁴⁹ Park land in Sonoma exceeds the City standard

⁴⁵ Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005.

⁴⁶ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

⁴⁷ City of Sonoma, Two-Year Budget, FY 03-04/ FY 04-05, 47.

⁴⁸ Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁴⁹ City of Sonoma 2005-2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, May 2004, 37. Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

of 5 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents.⁵⁰ Sonoma residents also have access to 85 acres of regional parks (Maxwell Farms Regional Park) and 59.7 acres of state parks (Casa Grande/Mission and General Vallejo Home).⁵¹

⁵⁰ City of Sonoma 2005-2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, May 2004, 38.

⁵¹ City of Sonoma 2005-2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, May 2004, 37.

VII. POLICE

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Since July 2004, the Sonoma Police Department has contracted with the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office for its staff. Department personnel currently include a chief, 2 sergeants, and 8 officers (a total of 11 sworn officers), in addition to 2 non-sworn community service officers and one secretary.⁵² A grant-funded traffic enforcement officer was added in FY 05-06.⁵³ Prior to its contract with the County, the Department maintained 16 sworn positions to provide adequate sick leave and vacation coverage. Officials state that contracting for staff has allowed the Department to decrease this number, as coverage is now provided by the County's larger employee base.⁵⁴

Under the Department's contract with the County, Sonoma's officers work closely with the two sergeants at the County's Valley substation to respond to incidents throughout Sonoma Valley. Police staff report that, at times, Sonoma police staff respond to incidents outside City limits. The Department also participates financially in regional programs such as a joint gang enforcement program and contracts with the County for explosives ordinance enforcement.⁵⁵

The majority of the Department's FY 05-06 \$3.2 million operating budget comes from the City's General Fund, with some additional state grant funding.⁵⁶

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Sonoma police station is located at 175-1st Street West. The City is currently developing plans to remodel this station. Renovations would bring the building into compliance with ADA standards and seismic safety code. The City is exploring various cost models for the project. Police department staff have recommended a "Sheriff Contract Model," which assumes Police services will continue to be provided by the County Sheriff. In this scenario, some Department activities will be performed at Sheriff's headquarters, requiring a building approximately 5,000 square feet smaller than would otherwise be necessary; cost savings under this model are estimated at over \$2.4 million.⁵⁷ Funding for these renovations is likely to come from Community

⁵² Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005. As of July 1, 2005, the new Department Chief is Paul Day.

⁵³ Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁵⁴ Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

⁵⁷ Supplemental Report: Police Facility Project Scope and Cost Options, prepared for the City Council Study Session of January 5, 2005.

Development Agency tax increments.⁵⁸ As of October 2005, this project is in the final conceptual design stage, with construction anticipated to begin in summer 2006.⁵⁹

The Department's equipment includes three unmarked cars and seven patrol cars. The Department reports that its vehicles are generally adequate to meet demand. Annual budget contributions to a vehicle replacement fund help cover the costs of equipment maintenance and replacement; the City's budget includes a schedule for vehicle replacement through 2008.⁶⁰ The City recently entered into a fleet service agreement with the County for the maintenance and acquisition of police department vehicles. While replacement costs under this program are unchanged, it is anticipated that less City staff time will be involved in buying and outfitting new vehicles. The program is expected to result in a small reduction in direct maintenance expenditures and a significant reduction in City staff time spent in administering vehicle maintenance, freeing up more time for direct public safety activities.⁶¹

The Department responds to between 16,000 and 18,000 events per year.⁶² In 2002, there were 17,502 total calls for police service, with theft (42 percent), vandalism (21 percent), and burglary (18 percent) representing the largest categories of criminal activity.⁶³ The Department recently started tracking calls for service separately from officer-initiated field events; during 2004-2005, the Department responded to approximately 12,000 calls for service.⁶⁴ The performance outcome standards established in the contract between the Department and the County set a maximum response time goal of 6.9 minutes.⁶⁵

In addition to standard law enforcement, the Department is involved in running Sonoma's Youth and Family Services program. It also works with the YWCA to provide domestic violence advocates. A full-time school resource officer is funded jointly through a Community Oriented Police Services grant and matching funds from the local school district.⁶⁶

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to the Department, current staff is sufficient to maintain the existing level of service, as no major growth is anticipated in the City. Officials state that Sonoma's contract with the County allows it to provide police service with smaller staff than

⁵⁸ Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005.

⁵⁹ Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁶⁰ Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005. City of Sonoma, Two-Year Budget, FY 03-04/ FY 04-05, 37.

⁶¹ Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 17 Jan. 2006.

⁶² Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005.

⁶³ Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 34.

⁶⁴ Interview with Debbie Bernhardt, Sonoma Police, 1 Nov. 2005.

⁶⁵ Interview with Department Chief John Gurney, 4 Jan. 2005.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

would be required in a stand-alone police force, at significant cost savings. These savings, as well as reduced facilities costs associated with the contract, will help the Department deal with any unanticipated growth or new costs.⁶⁷

Other forms of reorganization may also contribute to the Department's ability to provide law enforcement services. According to the City of Sonoma's website, "In recent years, the department has oriented itself according to the philosophy of community policing, with the goal of reducing crime by establishing and maintaining an active, working relationship with the community. Steps taken in this regard include the reorganization of the department by flattening the command structure and placing more officers on the streets, increased foot and bicycle patrols and implementation of a variety of youth outreach programs."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/Departments/police.shtml>>.

VIII. FIRE

Fire protection for Sonoma is provided by the City's fire department, covered in the previous MSR conducted for fire districts. The relevant section is reprinted below, updated as of October 2005.

The City of Sonoma Fire Department provides fire protection and pre-hospital medical services to Sonoma's population of 9,284 in an area of 2.2 square miles.

Future high-density, multistory development may require the Department to purchase special equipment not currently included in its budget; impact fees are being discussed as a possible funding source for such purchases. The Department is exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of its Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District (VOMFPD).

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Fire Department employs 22 full-time employees, including a Fire Chief, two Fire Division Chiefs, four Captains, nine Firefighter/ Paramedics, three Paramedics, and three EMTs. The Department also employs two part-time clerical employees (one FTE) and between 45 and 60 part-time paramedics and EMTs (depending on seasonal demand), and has 20 volunteer firefighters.⁶⁹

The Department's FY 05-06 budget is approximately \$1.7 million, primarily from the City's General Fund. This includes \$1.3 million in employee expenses, \$391,000 in services, supplies, operations, and maintenance, and \$33,000 in capital projects.⁷⁰ The Department's Prehospital Medical Services division, known as Sonoma Valley FireMed, operates as an enterprise fund with some assistance from the City's General Fund. FireMed supports its operations through fees for service and "ambulance memberships" that waive unpaid service fee balances in exchange for a flat annual membership fee.⁷¹

According to the Background Report prepared for the City's upcoming General Plan update, "Since 2001, the Fire Department has been operating under a JPA with the Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District, which provides fire protection for a large area of Sonoma Valley. The JPA allows the two agencies to function as a single entity. Training, call responses, and other operations are fully coordinated. This blending has allowed for a number of efficiencies, such as the sharing of command staff and other administrative personnel, while extending the capabilities of the two organizations. In recognition of this unified structure, the Fire Department and the District now operate as

⁶⁹ City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/Departments/fire.shtml>>. 29 Sept. 2004. Personal communication from City Manager Mike Fuson, 12 July 2005. Interview with City Manager Mike Fuson, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁷⁰ City of Sonoma Two-Year Budget FY 05-06/ FY 06-07.

⁷¹ City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/Departments/fire.shtml>>.

the “Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority.”⁷² The two agencies are investigating a number of options relative to future sustainability and governance, including the potential for the JPA to become the employer for both Sonoma Fire Department and VOMFPD personnel.⁷³ Under the possible arrangement, existing equipment would remain the property of the City and District, but all new purchases would be the property of the JPA.⁷⁴

The Department’s FireMed division participates in joint marketing with Sonoma Valley Hospital.⁷⁵

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

In FY 04-05, the Department had 1,168 engine runs responding to calls for service. It maintains an ISO rating of 4. Its response time is generally four minutes or less from the time the station receives a call.⁷⁶

The Department has one station, built two years ago and located near the center of the City of Sonoma. Through its JPA with the VOMFPD, the Sonoma Fire Department also provides and receives support to and from the District’s three stations. The Department’s equipment inventory includes two engines, an aerial ladder, two paramedic ambulances, and five reserve ambulances used by FireMed.⁷⁷

DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to ABAG projections cited in the City’s General Plan, the City is expected to grow from 9,128 in 2000 to 10,800 in 2020, or 0.9 percent annually. The population of the

⁷² City of Sonoma. Background Report, 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, 35. Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 1 Nov. 2004.

⁷³ Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 1 Nov. 2004.

⁷⁶ Interviews with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004 and 21 Nov. 2005.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

City and its SOI is projected to go from 9,754 in 2000 to 13,000 in 2020, an average annual growth rate of 1.7 percent.⁷⁸ Limitations on residential building permits within the City restrict the amount of growth that is likely to occur. However, the General Plan's increasing emphasis on high-density development may create demand for new types of fire protection service. Buildings of more than three stories, for example, will require an aerial ladder taller than the one the Department currently owns. The Department's existing aerial ladder is only halfway through its lifespan; as a result, the capital funds required to pay for a replacement have not yet accumulated. The Department has considered impact fees as a potential source of revenues to cover such new costs, though no such fees are currently in place.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ ABAG 2003 Projections, cited in Sonoma 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, Background Report, 27.

⁷⁹ Interviews with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004 and 21 Nov. 2005.

IX. DETERMINATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND DEFICIENCIES

- The SCWA is constructing a parallel aqueduct through Sonoma Valley to increase reliability of water delivery to the City of Sonoma. Additionally, Sonoma is in the process of replacing water laterals and mains and has repainted its storage tanks. The City is in its sixth year of a ten-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and will soon develop a new CIP for continual implementation.
- Achieving the required level of sewer service for General Plan buildout will require increasing wastewater treatment capacity beyond current permitted levels and increasing disposal capacity by securing more irrigators.
- Traffic analysis suggests that, by 2020, six intersections in the City of Sonoma will operate at a less than acceptable level of service during peak p.m. conditions. In the majority of cases, an acceptable level of service can be achieved through signalization. However, two intersections (Fifth Street West/ West Napa Street and Broadway/ Napa Street) present special challenges that may result in a reduced level of service.
- The City is currently developing plans to remodel its police station for ADA and seismic safety code compliance. Funding for these renovations is likely to come from Community Development Agency tax increments.
- New high-density, multistory development in Sonoma may require specialized equipment that is not included in the Fire Department's current capital replacement plan.

GROWTH AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR THE AFFECTED AREA

- Sonoma residents have approved a moratorium on growth outside the City's UGB. There is no foreseeable end date to this restriction on growth, so it is unlikely that the City will annex land beyond its SOI.
- Sonoma's engineering consultant is preparing a study that will address water demand from future growth in Sonoma.
- Anticipated growth within SVCSD's unincorporated areas and the City of Sonoma will require capacity increases and additional treated wastewater disposal capacity, for which the District is already planning.

FINANCING CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Employee costs have gone up in most City departments because of increases in pay and fringe benefit costs.
- The cost of purchasing water from the SCWA has risen over previous years because of revenue bond charges required for the construction of the Sonoma Parallel Aqueduct.

COST AVOIDANCE OPPORTUNITIES

- New water meter technologies will help Sonoma reduce water loss, thus decreasing costs. The first of these is a radio-read technology that reduces staff time and costs and increases efficiency and reliability. The second are e-coder meters, which retain water usage data for up to 60 days so meters only have to be read bi-monthly. These meters also have the capability to alert City staff to leaks, which can help homeowners save money.
- According to Department staff, the Police Department's contract with the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office allows it to provide police service with fewer staff than would be required in a stand-alone police force, at significant cost savings. In addition, this contract allows some Department activities to be performed at Sheriff's headquarters, reducing the building space needed at the City station. The estimated cost of planned station renovations under this arrangement is over \$2.4 million less than the estimate for a stand-alone station.
- Potential changes to the Fire Department's existing JPA with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District, such as making the JPA the employer for both agencies, could eliminate administrative costs.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RATE RESTRUCTURING

- Sonoma's water rate structure is tiered to encourage water conservation. With the rate structure, rates are analyzed and recommended for adjustment annually.
- The Fire Department has considered impact fees as a potential source of revenues to cover costs associated with new development, but no such fees are currently in place.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED FACILITIES

- Sonoma shares the use of the Sonoma Aqueduct and associated supply tank capacity with the SCWA and VOMWD. The agencies also share staff training costs.

- The Police Department participates financially in regional programs such as a joint gang enforcement program. It also works with the YWCA to provide domestic violence advocates and partners with the local school district to provide a school resource officer.
- The Sonoma Fire Department participates in a JPA with the VOMFPD under which the two agencies share training, call responses, and other operations, allowing both agencies to provide more effective and efficient service.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE OPTIONS

- The Sonoma Fire Department participates in a JPA with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District under which the two agencies share training, call responses, and other operations. The Sonoma Fire Department and VOMFPD have discussed making this JPA the employer for both agencies, among various organizational options.

EVALUATION OF MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCIES

- According to Police Department staff, Sonoma's contract with the County Sheriff's Office allows the City to draw on County resources and support staff. This arrangement makes it possible for the Police Department to operate more efficiently and with significant cost savings.

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

- Major decisions regarding the water system require approval by the Sonoma City Council. The City Manager can approve contracts up to \$25,000 without going out for a bid, while purchases over \$100 require only the verbal approval of the Public Works Administrator.
- The City of Sonoma hosts a web site, which features information on all City departments and the meeting agendas of the City Council and Planning Commission. The City's Development Code and other selected public documents are available for download. Council and commission meetings are open to the public.
- The SVCSD is governed by two members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Mayor of the City of Sonoma. Meetings and hearings are open to the public at the County Administration Center, Tuesday mornings.