Dear Partners,

Sonoma County Tourism is delighted to offer this Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan as a roadmap to developing a compelling, collaborative and broad-based destination. This plan looks a decade into the future through a data-driven foundation to offer programming to guide Sonoma County’s evolution to meet the rapidly changing needs of the traveler, sentiment of the local residents and potential for ongoing internal and external impacts.

Throughout this plan, both long- and short-term objectives set ongoing benchmarks to chart progress. Each imperative also has a Big Audacious Goal – one we know requires great partnerships and tremendous work. But, we believe each of the goals will help all stakeholders take the steps necessary to achieve each imperative.

This plan isn’t designed to advance SCT, rather to benefit this region -- a place we all cherish. As a Destination Stewardship Organization, SCT is committed to being a force for good. We all want to leave this place better than when we arrived, and we believe the initiatives in this plan will do just that. That’s why, instead of a general master plan, we opted to focus on a plan that would help us achieve destination resiliency and continued stewardship. It’s a unique focus, but one that should serve us all very well.

We thank the many who participated in our focus groups, collaborated with the assessments, and took the surveys. We talked with many Northern California leaders who not only represent the tourism industry, but tangential and critical sectors such as transportation, housing, business, education, government and residents. Your input proved invaluable.

We thank our partners at the Coraggio Group for facilitating the focus groups and providing insights throughout the process. Because of your expertise at developing similar plans and understanding of the tourism industry, the plan is more layered, strategic and meaningful.

Finally, great thanks to the Sonoma County Tourism Board of Directors and committee members. Your challenges, support and insights give us the reason to think big, be bold and move forward in an innovative way. We acknowledge the extraordinary contribution from all who provided input and guidance at the back of this plan.

Now the work begins. Sonoma County Tourism is committed to ensuring this document does not collect dust. This is an actionable and measurable plan that requires we roll up our sleeves, have some difficult conversations, look at our destination in a little different way, and get moving. Sonoma County Tourism cannot accomplish this plan alone. We look forward to driving, partnering and influencing the projects outlined in this plan. Don’t hesitate to let us know what you think. Your feedback is imperative to moving this forward in an effective way.

Thank you, all, for your great support and partnership,

Claudia Vecchio
President & CEO
Sonoma County Tourism
The Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan is designed to frame the architecture for building Sonoma County as a destination of choice for the future. While Sonoma County Tourism is charged with shaping the region as a tourism destination, in an economy so driven by tourism, it’s critical that all business, social and residential sectors coalesce around a shared vision for the future. It is imperative that the tourism industry look beyond its typical borders to identify components that make up the visitor experience and resident quality of life that all impact the potential for success of the collective tourism and hospitality industry.

This plan seeks to challenge the norm, pose difficult questions, and ask “what if,” and “why not?”. This plan encourages aspirational thinking, creative exploration and outrageous ideas. Within Sonoma County Tourism’s Life Opens Up brand mantra, this region is described as a “progressive community of artisans.” It is with that resourceful approach, we share this plan with those who truly want to move this destination forward.
INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Sonoma County’s tourism economy has a history of delivering significant value and economic impact to its communities and businesses. Yet, the combined emergencies of natural phenomena and visitor behaviors have threatened the quality of life and traveler experience in Sonoma County, requiring new strategies and resources to be leveraged to enable the future viability of tourism in the region. SCT has taken steps to lead and engage the county’s diverse tourism industry stakeholders, adjacent industry leaders and resident community in pursuit of a plan for a future of sustainable and resilient destination stewardship.

The county’s tourism viability is being challenged in myriad ways, including extreme drought, wildfires, floods and changing weather patterns, housing challenges, workforce shortages, evolving traveler behaviors and unprecedented infrastructure demands. As the future of tourism in Sonoma County hinges on decisive leadership, clarity of vision and collaborative strategic action are key.
In 2018, SCT set out to craft a plan that would identify key objectives, opportunities and obstacles around creating a destination and becoming a global leader in sustainability and resiliency. On the shoulders of the Sonoma County Winegrowers 2015 proclamation that the county would be the first fully sustainable winegrowing region in the world—a feat it achieved in 2019—and with SCT evolving from a Destination Marketing Organization into a Destination Stewardship Organization, the timing of the initiative seemed ideal. With the impacts of the 2017 wildfires and the growing anger and mistrust around the tourism industry from residents and key stakeholders, it was a critical time for SCT to reconsider how the destination was being promoted, how the tourism industry was perceived, and the true value of travel to the Sonoma County economy.

As the project was beginning in the fall of 2018, Sonoma County again faced a damaging wildfire, forcing SCT to shuffle its budget and focus on recovery. Then in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and yet another series of wildfires forced the organization to suspend its long-term planning efforts.

In 2022, with the world emerging from the sweeping impacts of the pandemic, a respite from annual wildfires and the potential of gaining some momentum, SCT redoubled its efforts toward long-term planning, reengaging Coraggio Group to facilitate all research programming and input sessions, and reimagining what Sonoma County could become for residents and visitors within the context of the tourism industry.

The project was divided into three phases: Get Clear, Get Focused, and Get Moving. Over the course of a year, SCT, its diverse partners and Coraggio worked to complete each phase and identify critical areas of focus, significant goals, and spheres of influence designed to help move Sonoma County forward far into the future.

Each of the focus areas is divided into sections outlining various levels of goals. Each section has a “Big Audacious Goal,” designed to be a stretch goal, one that should it come to fruition, would move the County along in a significant way. The short-term goals are those that can be addressed immediately and often are the foundation for longer-term goals. The long-term goals are those that either require preliminary steps to be taken before pursuing or because of funding or other resource challenges, require a longer-term commitment. While some of these goals are outlined in this plan, additional goals will be presented as the plan continues to develop over time.

**Sonoma County Tourism’s Role in Accomplishing the Initiatives Outlined**

How Sonoma County Tourism acts within the various spheres of influence becomes the platform for approaching each of the focus areas. The level to which SCT is involved in the action plan development and execution determines how integral the organization is in achieving the activities outlined within the focus area. SCT is not the sole driver of any of the five focus areas. This illuminates the need for partnerships and collaboration to help ensure the achievement of the actions outlined in the plan. The levels of the sphere of influence are:

**DRIVER**

As a DRIVER, SCT is at the helm of developing and achieving the action planning of the particular imperative. In this plan, SCT is a DRIVER (along with a PARTNER) for:

- Build a Naturally Resilient Destination
- Strengthen the Health of our Economy
- Enhance the Breadth of Products and Experiences

**PARTNER**

As a PARTNER, SCT works cooperatively with other entities to accomplish the goals outlined in the focus area. The partner entities are generally those that SCT works closely with on a day-to-day basis for its core programming. In this plan, SCT is a PARTNER (along with being a DRIVER):

- Build a Naturally Resilient Destination
- Strengthen the Health of our Economy
- Enhance the Breadth of Products and Experiences.

The level depends on the initiatives and the organizations most responsible for the success of each.

**INFLUENCER**

While the initiatives outlined in a focus area may be critical for the long-term success of the destination, SCT has no direct capacity to impact the outcome. In this plan, SCT is an INFLUENCER for:

- Elevate the Resident Quality of Life
- Acknowledge and Advance Sonoma County’s Culture and Heritage
The initiatives provided in this plan are those that Sonoma County Tourism believes will provide the greatest opportunity for meaningful growth in sustainability and destination resiliency and that are achievable given the human and financial resources allocated toward achieving this plan. The plan could include many more proposed outcomes, but that could ultimately result in actually achieving fewer of them. Rather, we’ve outlined those with the greatest potential for impact. While the goal is always to stretch capacity to achieve bold and innovative objectives, a balance between the day-to-day objectives and long-term goals has been considered.

**VISION**
A Sonoma County where industry sectors and communities coalesce around a roadmap for a sustainable and resilient destination, a diversified economy, and a stellar resident quality of life.

**MISSION**
Sonoma County Tourism inspires a commitment to innovation and community among all stakeholders to achieve a collective long-term vision for Sonoma County.

**VALUES**
- **Authentic** Programming and the approach to conveying the story around the programming will be authentic, truthful, transparent and real.
- **Collaborative** Accomplishment of any of the programs will require collaboration and alignment around the roadmap to achievement. This effort will be most effective through a synergistic approach.
- **Aspirational** Many of the complex goals outlined in the plan require all entities to stretch capacity to accomplish. Through a data-driven, metrics-based approach, goals and programs will be monitored to determine progress toward the goal.
- **Dynamic** Issues arise that can take a plan in a direction other than the one originally conceived. Part of being resilient is having the flexibility to respond to situations that require course correction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERARCHING GOALS FOR SONOMA COUNTY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sonoma County will become the premier destination for responsible travelers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sonoma County Tourism will be the catalyst for an evolution in partnerships and community alignment that moves the destination forward toward true resiliency and sustainability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sonoma County will have a strong foundation of adequate housing and robust workforce development that sustains the industry growth that will come as a result of the plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Residents will feel part of enhancing the region's quality of life and developing a destination that compels responsible travelers.</td>
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STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

Our efforts to promote Sonoma County as a destination and strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry must:

- Ensure net positive impacts to the quality of life of our residents, businesses and communities
- Promote and enable responsibly experiencing our communities, lands and products
- Support and advance responsible infrastructure development that aligns with the character and values of our communities
- Encourage policies, initiatives and behaviors that prioritize the health and longevity of our natural resources and way of life
- Uphold equity, accountability and innovation in our efforts to disperse tourism’s economic and other benefits throughout Sonoma County
- Acknowledge and celebrate our unique culture and heritage while embracing and advancing diversity and inclusion
- Seek, model and convene inclusive, productive and collaborative engagement among Sonoma County’s public and private sector industry partners and stakeholders for the benefit of both residents and visitors
Indigenous people had called the region known as Sonoma County home for at least 12,000 years before the arrival of the Spanish missionaries in the early 19th century. It is estimated that as many as 5,000 Native Americans lived in what is now Sonoma County prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Local Tribes included the Pomo, Coast Miwok and Wappo. The land, coast and waterways are under the stewardship of the indigenous people to this day.

As a region rich in natural beauty, it is imperative that any long-term plan focused on tourism address how travelers interact with the land, protect the extraordinary bounty of agricultural resources, and ensure a sustainable future for the region.

Creating a resilient destination in an environment as fragile as Sonoma County requires a serious commitment to stewardship and thoughtful placemaking. Embracing the three elements of sustainability, People, Planet and Prosperity, SCT aims to help create long-term resiliency that permeates each of these three critical aspects through programming that addresses the most salient driving factors of each.
KEY SUCCESS METRICS

• Realize year-over-year reduction in carbon emissions of the tourism industry and track emission reduction of all industry sectors outlined in this plan.

• Achieve sustainable tourism destination certification through a GSTC-accredited certification body

• Diversify sources of and increase funding for Sonoma County Tourism by at least 30%

BIG AUDACIOUS GOAL
Sonoma County becomes the center of global climate change thought leadership through an annual convening of the most forward-thinking agriculture, marine, air and land management innovators.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
Sonoma County Tourism as a DRIVER and PARTNER

INDUSTRY SECTORS/PARTNERS
Government (emergency/crisis management, land management), private and non-profit land managers, marine protection, water agencies, national and international agencies and organizations committed to sustainable travel.

OVERVIEW
Ensure the policies, procedures and initiatives are in place to protect and preserve the environment, mitigate natural disasters and ensure SCT is prepared to manage any change.

STRATEGIES

• Integrate programming that works to shift visitor behavior toward more responsible actions and activities.

• Create long-term programs that elevate the commitment to protecting the natural environment and help travelers better appreciate the responsibility we all have to lessen negative impacts and strengthen preservation efforts.

• Ensure SCT and industry partners are prepared to manage and mitigate crises.

• Work to find alternative funding sources for SCT that give the organization greater capacity to withstand funding pressure from any one source.
“It is no secret that folks are watching us, and we should think about how we want to lift up our reputation as a community that entered some of these really intractable challenges. As leaders, we must choose to solve those challenges in a way that’s humanistic, that’s creative and sustainable over the long term”

- Focus Group Participant
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION/OUTDOOR RECREATION

Helping ensure the long-term preservation and protection of Sonoma County’s natural resources is a focus for SCT. While several programs are part of the organization’s strategic plan and day-to-day initiatives, finding a way to position the destination as a true global leader is the goal of this plan.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Showcase the region as an innovator with key thought leaders. Convene an annual conference dedicated to sustainability and climate change initiatives, discussing impacts on tourism and agriculture-centered regions such as Sonoma County. The conference will become a seminal event across the industry as a think-tank for innovation and resiliency programming.
- Position Sonoma County as exceeding the state and federal compliance timelines for low carbon emissions and carbon offsetting initiatives when possible.
- Work with partners to promote the expansion and integration of SMART, EV program/EV transit, and e-bikes and e-scooters along with maps, apps and incentives across platforms.
- Encourage the development of a trekking program that offers locals and travelers the chance to experience the natural beauty of the county via a network of walking, biking, water trails, lodging options and interpretive programs.
- Enhance wayfinding for outdoor activity through integrations of digital channels/apps that consider environmental impacts while maximizing experiences.
- Collaborate with, cross-market, and support projects and programming that help achieve the goal of being a sustainable destination.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Convene leaders of land, water and animal conservation and action planning initiatives to continue moving the region forward as a sustainable travel destination. Identify ways to amplify extended networks to create collective impact.
- Address identified gaps and opportunities outlined in the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) assessment.
  - Conduct an accessibility assessment and work to address gaps found.
- Expand visitor education efforts through partnerships and programs that connect directly with visitors and partner organizations.
  - Continue to magnify and integrate Leave No Trace initiatives.
  - Incorporate digital wayfinding apps and the Sonoma County app in real-time communication and redirection for visitors in-market.
- Continue to identify ways for travelers to reduce their carbon footprint.
  - Elevate and continue to communicate carbon emission offset offerings.
- Create a grants program earmarked specifically for properties to incorporate sustainable practices/building practices if SCT elevates its funding level to allow offering grants.
- Continue partnerships with industry organizations.
  - Kind Traveler
  - Leave No Trace
- Schedule “Sustainable Destination Missions,” opportunities for Sonoma County stakeholders to visit other destinations that are integrating innovative sustainability and recreation programming into their work.
CRISIS PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Sonoma County has experienced several crises over the past five years. Managing crisis is part of SCT’s ongoing strategic plan. However, ensuring a more collaborative broad-based approach to crisis preparation and management is the focus of this plan.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Continue work with partner agencies to ensure the plan and its communication channels are updated at least annually.
- Ensure the SCT crisis plan is updated each year and all partners, including lodging properties, AVAs, Chambers, Visitor Bureaus are apprised of any revisions.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Continue work with County emergency management offices to ensure strong partnership and communications pre-, during-, and post-crisis.
- Crisis communication and management plans ensure that all parties are included, updated and educated.
- Continue to promote the advances of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management office in communication (wireless emergency, radio information).
- Align with the Sonoma County Hospitality Association on educational sessions around crisis preparation and management.
ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Partners across the county rely on SCT to be funded at a level that ensures robust programming that not only provides funding to the organization, but also creates opportunities for additional funding for partner businesses. SCT’s success also rests on support from both partners and residents. This focus area helps ensure active outreach to both critical constituent groups.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Secure at least one additional major source of organizational funding per year.
- Pursue competitive federal grants with sufficient Return on Investment, including USDA, Economic Development Administration (EDA) and others as possible.
- Collaborate with partners, local government officials and staff, and others on grants and other funding initiatives.
- Elevate SCT’s connectivity with key stakeholders through engaging in substantive conversations that identify solutions for issues facing the industry.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Identify ways to diversify SCT’s budget through funding streams that offer reliable, long-term funds that allow the organization to create robust programming and be able to mitigate external impacts. This will ensure the long-term health of the organization.
- Conduct annual surveys to monitor resident sentiment regarding SCT and its operational effectiveness
  - SCT will identify ways to connect with the local community that address any issues and opportunities highlighted in the survey.
- Ensure annually that SCT has the plan and connectivity to its partners required to handle internal and external crises.
**IMPERATIVE LONG-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOs)**

- While walks and paths currently exist in Sonoma County, the goal is to build a multi-day trekking experience that showcases the natural and cultural resources of the region. To create a compelling experience for visitors from around the world and highlight messages around responsible land use and resource protection, a county-wide trek system with connectivity to overnight accommodations will be built and promoted. This will require a multi-faceted partnership between SCT and several partners and residents whose access permissions may be required.

- To build toward the goal of Sonoma County being the epicenter of responsible travel and the travel industry's commitment to mitigate climate change, an annual sustainability convening will be developed.

- To help ensure robust conversations among all key stakeholders, a semi-annual meeting of elected officials and key stakeholders will be hosted by SCT. There, solutions to issues and opportunities facing the industry, local businesses and residents will be identified and addressed.

- Building on the success of loyalty programs across industry sectors, SCT will create a first-to-market destination stewardship loyalty program that incentivizes visitors to protect and preserve the environment, creating a community of loyal fans.
  - Offer online communities that generate vibrant conversation and help people feel part of a circle of like-minded conservation travelers
  - Generate incentives that encourage visitation to Sonoma County and become badges of accomplishment for travelers

**IMPERATIVE SHORT-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOs)**

- To ensure Sonoma County is taking a broad-based approach to reduction, SCT will work with its partners to lower year-over-year tourism industry-wide carbon emissions, water consumption, and waste output.
  - Provide training and resources for businesses to identify baselines for continuous improvement (encouraging third-party verification of progress).

- Although Sonoma County has established itself as a leader in sustainable travel, SCT can continue to solidify this position and provide additional opportunities for its partners through two initiatives.
  - Destination certification. By working with a Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) accredited certification organization, SCT will become a certified destination
  - Becoming a signatory to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action.

- Measure and disclose travel and tourism-related emissions (ensuring measurement methodologies are aligned to UNFCCC-relevant guidelines) and enter a sustainability management cycle aimed at year-over-year improvement.

- To help ensure true resiliency as a destination and to prepare both tourism industry partners and visitors for unexpected crises, SCT will work with its partners on several important initiatives.
  - Develop and provide universal crisis preparation/management procedures for all traditional and short-term rental lodging properties, restaurants and attractions.
  - Partner, promote and host workshops identified by Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management that are promoted to every sector of the tourism industry.
  - Convene an annual crisis plan update session in the first quarter of each year to prepare for the year ahead.
  - Conduct a Crisis and Emergency Preparedness Evaluation for the tourism sector and when completed, integrate the results and recommendations into the SCT Crisis Plan.

- To create a high level of organizational resiliency, Sonoma County Tourism will work to increase its funding by 30%—to $12 million or more—through long-term reliable sources of revenue. This will give the organization the foundation needed to manage ongoing programming and respond to any impacts. This funding level will allow the organization to compete against similar destinations and best serve its constituents through robust sales, marketing, and community engagement programming. This includes programming outlined both within this plan and in the biennial strategic business plan.
Tourism is a critical economic driver for Sonoma County. Employing more than ten percent of the overall workforce and generating $2 billion in countywide revenue, the value of tourism in shaping the future of the region cannot be overstated. While diversification of the economy is always important to ensure a resilient destination, tourism will continue to drive the region’s economic engine for the foreseeable future.

Driving tourism-related business into Sonoma County is a core component of SCT’s day-to-day efforts. Many of the organization’s short-term initiatives within this focus area are included in the biennial strategic plan.

To some extent, the majority of programs outlined in all other imperatives help drive the region’s economy. Identifying and maximizing those intersections will be key to the success of the entire plan.
KEY SUCCESS METRICS

• Increase the percentage of service sector jobs with livable wages/benefits.

• Create and convey messaging and marketing pieces that showcase the quality of life that comes from working and living in Sonoma County.

• Work with applicable business sectors and educational institutions to develop a business development accelerator program specific to people of color, women and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

BIG AUDACIOUS GOAL

Build a fully sustainable convention center that can house meetings, corporate training, special events or other convenings. The facility also may be used to house residents during a crisis and will be outfitted to ensure the infrastructure is prepared to provide these critical needs.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Sonoma County Tourism as a DRIVER and PARTNER

INDUSTRY SECTORS/PARTNERS

Government (Economic Development Board, Creative Sonoma, permitting agencies, city councils, city managers), Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Centers, Sonoma County Tourism (board and committees)

OVERVIEW

Sonoma County’s economy is largely dependent on tourism. Through the initiatives outlined in this plan, the tourism-facing economy will continue to grow in strategic and innovative ways. Through robust partnership, these initiatives will go above and beyond the day-to-day activities of SCT.

STRATEGIES

• Create a built environment that increases Sonoma County’s appeal as a year-round business and leisure destination.

• Forge new partnerships with sectors such as technology, banking and other businesses that can help convey the business/profit story for sustainable and responsible travel.

• Tenaciously monitor industry performance to identify opportunities for growth.

• Continue to monitor and convey performance and recovery of the tourism sector post-pandemic and following any other major impacts to help partner businesses make the needed revisions to their own business plans and prepare for future crises.
CONVENTION CENTER DEVELOPMENT

At present, approximately five percent of Sonoma County’s overall visitation is business travel (Longwoods, Travels USA 2021). Spending data through Visa Destination Insights shows this traveler consistently spends almost twice as much as a leisure traveler; in 2022, average spend per card was $195 and $99 for business and leisure travelers, respectively.

One of the key trends in travel is BLiesure, the combination of business and leisure travel. A convention center will help the region maximize this hybrid visit, generating additional revenue for local businesses, municipalities and the County. Sonoma County has a unique opportunity to build a facility that is a showcase for the industry, incorporating the region’s commitment to sustainability, providing multi-use facilities for corporate training and executive retreats, and serving the community through special events and crisis management.

Sonoma County can become a vibrant meetings destination with the development of a well-placed, fully sustainable convention/convening/crisis center through a careful and thoughtful process. The facility will provide meeting spaces for small and medium-sized groups, be readily accessible to transportation corridors and meet the long-term needs of the business community.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Work toward the development of a convention center. The development of a convention center complex will require collaboration among a wide array of government agencies, citizen groups and developers. SCT will work to facilitate the entire process from feasibility study to ribbon cutting.
  - Identify concession/retail partners and secure facility naming rights
  - Determine long-term center management structure
  - Sell the facility and convention set-up services component of SCT.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Work with various business sectors to begin conversations around the feasibility of a convention/conference center complex.
- SCT will work with all entities involved in identifying, funding, building and managing the center to help ensure an efficient process.

“To sustain tourism, we need to have affordable housing, we need to have a workforce that can actually afford to live in Sonoma County.”

— Focus Group Participant
CREATIVE ECONOMY

A creative economy is based on people’s use of their creative imagination to increase an idea’s value. John Howkins developed the concept in 2001 to describe economic systems where value is based on novel imaginative qualities rather than the traditional resources of land, labor and capital. Compared to creative industries, which are limited to specific sectors, the term is used to describe creativity throughout a whole economy.

Working toward a creative economy means that not only is art (in all its forms) recognized as an important economic driver, but decisions made by policymakers and business leaders are done in a way that elevates forward-thinking and creative approaches. As part of its strategic plan, SCT works with Creative Sonoma and other arts organizations to elevate arts and their appeal to visitors. The long-term focus is the more impactful public art arena. Recognizing that a community’s visible commitment to art in the public realm is a magnet for visitors, residents and business recruitment and retention, SCT will support and communicate public art installations and the artists who create them.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

• As Creative Sonoma and other arts organizations formally advocate for approval and implementation of a countywide Percent-for-Art Ordinance, which would provide for creation of new art in conjunction with new public capital construction projects, SCT will work to educate its own constituents on the opportunities the ordinance could provide for the community.

• Sonoma County will be a place known for innovative approaches to public-facing issues and creative solutions to issues such as homelessness, housing availability and affordability, and climate change.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

• Work with Creative Sonoma to elevate its goal that creativity becomes a defining economic driver for Sonoma County.

• Drive demand for and supply of creative services
  • Hire local creatives when possible (graphic designers, film/video/audio professionals, animation, etc.)
  • Include work by emerging and established culture workers in all marketing materials
  • Expand the network of creatives that feed SCT marketing and web content, ensuring that creative organizations and individuals are participating in AHP programs, lunch and learns, etc.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The tourism economy is dependent on a strong and professional workforce. While the region is grappling with major issues that impact the desire of workers to choose Sonoma County, such as insufficient housing and public transportation, SCT will work to be at the table for conversations it can help solve.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

• While many partners have initiatives in place that strengthen their internal workforce, SCT will monitor and partner with the hospitality industry as a whole to identify ways to enhance the experience of workers in the destination.
• SCT will help bolster the appeal of Sonoma County as a desirable place to work by partnering with the Economic Development Board to create recruitment messaging around what makes Sonoma County a great place to have a career.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

• Explore, encourage, and participate in nontraditional partnerships that involve business, government and education sectors to solve workforce constraints.
• Integrate programs that take advantage of H1 VISA programs to help bring employees from global locations.
• Identify ways the tourism & hospitality industry will address the issue of living wages, helping ensure employees have compensation commensurate with the cost of living in Sonoma County.
• Invite and convene decision-makers for a conversation around workforce needs and gaps.
• Prioritize workforce initiatives that ensure equitable access and affordability.

VACATION RENTAL COMMUNITY

The vacation/short-term rental sector will most certainly evolve over the course of this plan, but they are important partners with SCT, and the organization will continue to monitor issues facing the vacation rental community. SCT will continue to work with the Sonoma County Hospitality Association to mitigate issues that arise and move the sector forward in ways that help the properties and neighborhoods succeed. SCT will continue to evaluate ongoing marketing and sales opportunities for vacation/short-term rentals on SCT’s various marketing channels.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

• Sonoma County has integrated policies and business practices that, in balance, benefit both vacation rental owners and residents.
• Vacation rental properties and their owners have fully integrated into SCT’s board, committees and marketing channels.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

• Partner with the vacation rental community to help ensure the policies for doing business benefit owner/operators and mitigate impacts to neighborhoods.
• Communicate the value of vacation rentals as an option for lodging in SCT’s marketing channels.
• Forge bonds with the vacation rental industry so that the value of the partnership results in the sector becoming an investor in Sonoma County Tourism’s destination marketing initiatives.
IMPERATIVE LONG-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)

• Build a multi-use, profitable convention/conference center. SCT realizes this is a business/developer, political and community issue that will require a tremendous amount of work to be successful. This multi-phased project will begin during the first years of the master plan’s implementation and will evolve throughout the life of the plan.

• Create a sustainable and professional workforce. A well-trained, robust workforce is central to the achievement of much of the programming outlined in this plan.

• Continue to partner with the vacation rental sector and its intersection with the Sonoma County Hospitality Association to manage and mitigate issues and market the segment to visitors.

IMPERATIVE SHORT-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)

• Laying the foundation for a convention center requires a multi-faceted outreach. During the first several years of this plan, a strategy will be formed and administered that helps ensure support from all key sectors.

• Identify a consultant and conduct a feasibility study that lays the foundation for a successful project. The study will include potential locations that meet the needs of the business traveler and the broad Sonoma County community.

• Identify creative funding solutions to ensure the center has the resources needed to become a highly functional and appealing facility.

• Work with developers, city and county permitting and other investors/partners to facilitate discussions regarding all facets of the property from design to construction.

• Help ensure the facility encapsulates the Sonoma County commitment to sustainability through incorporating LEED certification, solar energy and other renewable energy solutions.

• Ensure efficient facility ingress and egress for vehicular traffic.

• Collaborate with residents and other stakeholders to curate a facility that will be available to house residents in times of crisis and meet the broad needs that arise during those periods.

• Create a compelling invitation for workers to choose Sonoma County. Along with industry and government agencies, including the Economic Development Board and the Sonoma County Hospitality Association, SCT will spearhead programs that showcase the region to potential employees.

• The value of a creative economy is founded on gaining real data that shows how innovative thinking and problem solving can generate real solutions. SCT will work with Creative Sonoma and other local arts agencies to identify and convey the value proposition for the creative economy.

• Administer at least two data-driven projects/case studies that showcase how creative economy ideologies can drive innovation.

• Create a Sonoma County Tourism Student Partnership program that introduces potential careers in the tourism/hospitality industry with regional universities/colleges.
Tourism has been recognized as both a blessing and a curse for residents of Sonoma County. Many residents began as visitors and returned as property owners. Others, some life-long residents, have seen significant changes to their towns and neighborhoods over the course of time. For both groups, changes have largely been deemed as having negative impacts. Tourism, however, also is the reason residents have many of the essential services they enjoy including robust health care, education, the arts and recreation. Taxes paid by overnight visitors help fund many of the key attributes that lead to a high quality of life.

Sonoma County Tourism recognizes the need for balance between marketing the destination to travelers and contributing to a sustainable and healthy quality of life for residents. As a destination stewardship organization, SCT takes a broad-based approach to furthering the destination and creating a model for success that benefits all. Throughout this plan, and within the organization's ongoing strategic plan, initiatives are included that increase opportunities for resident input and elevate collaboration on essential programs.
KEY SUCCESS METRICS

- Measure and increase the resident sentiment around tourism score.
- Work with the Sonoma Marin Regional Transit (SMART) to identify and communicate “first and last mile” transportation solutions.
- Sonoma County has adequate affordable housing stock for its hospitality and tourism sector workforce.

BIG AUDACIOUS GOAL
Sonoma County has sufficient housing to accommodate residents at all economic levels.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
Sonoma County Tourism as INFLUENCER and DRIVER

KEY SECTORS/PARTNERS
Transportation (Sonoma County Transportation Authority, Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport), Housing (primarily affordable housing for tourism/hospitality workforce), agencies working to mitigate and serve the unsheltered community, residents and organizations that allow residents to have a voice, such as regional Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs). Within the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility space, key partners will include agencies and organizations that represent diverse populations and those that help build accessible destinations.

OVERVIEW
Create a quality of life that works well for residents, resulting in safe and comfortable neighborhoods, a robust workforce, affordable housing solutions, an equitable and inclusive environment, and innovative transportation options.

STRATEGIES

- Support transportation infrastructure updates.

- Partner with transportation agencies including the Sonoma County Transportation Authority to provide input from a traveler’s perspective for projects and initiatives that intersect with the visitor experience. Message success around each initiative to help ensure that visitors find a more functional transportation infrastructure in Sonoma County.

- Continue to partner with the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport (STS) to identify innovative initiatives to increase flights, manage issues around flight path noise and communicate sustainability initiatives.

- Participate in efforts to identify affordable housing solutions. Work with government agencies overseeing housing to provide best practices and/or innovative solutions.

- Support efforts to find solutions to the issues surrounding the unsheltered population.

- Work with residents as well as formal and informal groups that allow for resident guidance to create support around the initiatives outlined in this plan.

- Identify gaps in accessibility—physical, cognitive and language—and identify solutions to making Sonoma County fully accessible.

Support and integrate DEI initiatives.

- Participate in conversations that help make Sonoma County a more inclusive and equitable environment.

- Continue to monitor SCT’s DEI initiatives to ensure the organization is operating at a high commitment to DEI in its internal and external programming.
TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a critical component of the county’s infrastructure, and one in which SCT’s influence is limited. The Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s (SCTA) 2021 Comprehensive Transportation Plan lays out long-range goals and projects, all of which will impact visitors and residents. SCT supports the SCTA’s vision for the future of transportation in Sonoma County. The vision for the future of highways and roadways in Sonoma County incorporates safe and well-maintained roadways, efficient use of infrastructure, and complete streets with safe access for multiple modes. This includes projects that improve pavement conditions, complete the HOV corridor on Highway 101, enhance intelligent transportation systems, construct safety and efficiency improvements at freeway interchanges and roadway intersections, and engineer multi-modal corridor improvements such as transit pullouts, protected bike lanes and sidewalks.

Highway 37 is a major issue for the regional transportation infrastructure. The roadway is under threat from sea level rise and could see significant inundation by 2050. While the infrastructure remediation is under the authority of Sonoma and Marin County transportation coalition agencies, this is a highly traversed road for travelers and workers coming into the county.

As a partner, SCT’s most important role will be to collaborate with the SCTA on critical initiatives:

• Integrate ongoing research showing how visitors travel through the county, including data from the NEAR platform and the use of the Sonoma County app.

• Act as a communications conduit through which notice of transportation impacts and improvements can be conveyed to the audiences within SCT’s communications sphere.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

• Continue to monitor regulations around clean air/alternative modes of transportation exceeding the timeframes for integrating statewide policies guiding vehicle emissions.

• Partner with the SCTA and other agencies to message their initiative to create a sustainable future for State Highway 37.

• Partner with the SCTA on messages to visitors as the entire bus fleet is converted to electric vehicles.

• Work with the Charles Schulz STS airport to convey messages as it accomplishes projects that maximize sustainability and increases the solar footprint.
"My biggest concern is that tourism growth will outgrow/outpace our community’s ability to make the important decisions to protect and nourish our county."

— Focus Group Participant
HOUSING

Sonoma County has long been an expensive housing market but has become even more so in recent years. Often, workers in the tourism and hospitality industry need to travel significant distances, with some traveling from out of the county to get to and from the workplace. Tourism and hospitality jobs typically require on-site work, so the ability to work remotely is scarce. A few employers have developed on-site worker housing that helps fill the gap, but the need for affordable housing is acute.

SCT can participate in discussions around housing and can provide data showing the rise in employment. SCT also can partner with the SCTA to correlate transportation and employment data to track housing need. As an organization, SCT has little influence over the building of affordable housing units, but it can be a convener for the industry and developers to uncover best practices of similar destinations that have had success as well as find and communicate opportunities.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

• Support the development of affordable housing projects and communicate options to tourism and hospitality workers.

• Communicate, in partnership with the County, the initiatives taken to ensure sufficient housing at all economic levels.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

• Partner with agencies that assess and redefine housing density expectations.

• Work with hospitality partners to identify creative ways to address workforce housing.

• Identify ways to communicate workforce housing options to tourism and hospitality industry employees

• Partner with city and county agencies dedicated to addressing the needs of the unhoused community.

• Help agencies understand how business and leisure travelers are impacted by groups of unsheltered people.
DEI+A

Sonoma County’s brand, Life Opens Up, conveys an equitable and welcoming message for responsible travelers. Sonoma County is home to a diverse population, with residents representing all backgrounds. True integration of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, however, will require a conscious effort among businesses and organizations to ensure an authentic appreciation of this diverse population.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are ongoing commitments by Sonoma County Tourism. Within its own organization, the team is dedicated to diversity in its hiring practices and in the imagery and messages conveyed in its external sales and marketing programming. Ongoing DEI initiatives are outlined in the organization’s biennial strategic plan.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council’s (GSTC) assessment (see Appendix B), defines accessibility to be:

Where practical, sites, facilities, and services, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that consider both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved. Information is made available on the accessibility of sites, facilities, and services.

The GSTC assessment of Sonoma County found gaps throughout the county pertaining to physical accessibility. SCT will work with accessibility experts to identify ways to make the destination fully accessible. Accessibility also needs to be considered for people with cognitive disabilities and language barriers. SCT will identify ways to mitigate the obstacles people face while visiting Sonoma County. In doing so, it can help eliminate the obstacles facing residents who travel throughout the county.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Continue to monitor the benchmarks for DEI integration and SCT’s achievement of the goals set forth in the biennial strategic plan.
- Revisit the partner DEI+A best practices on an annual basis to ensure robust participation from partner businesses.
- Continue to encourage the adoption of DEI+A imperatives within partner organizations.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Increase education and awareness of gaps in diversity of the local communities and the tourism industry.
- Create a directory of accessible tourism businesses, amenities, and experiences into one location that is easy to access and use.
- Incorporate accessibility resources within the inspiration guide and incorporate “Access for All” concepts in all SCT visitor promotion and guidance materials.
- Help ensure the majority of all experiences and built structures are fully accessible by all.
- Continue to update the accessibility assessment as new products and experiences become available to ensure accessibility.
- Expand the Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program to include racial equity training
  - Create additional education on bias for hospitality workers.
- Identify opportunities for elevating conversation and action around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility within all organizations with which SCT collaborates.
- Support and contribute to authentic discussions around DEI+A within the Sonoma County community.
- Ensure the tourism-facing community has the insights needed to incorporate DEI+A components into each organization.
Residents are a critical audience for Sonoma County Tourism and continuing to interface with communities throughout the county is a fundamental key to the success of this plan. The work to make substantive enhancements to the destination as outlined throughout the plan requires the support of residents.

While SCT works daily on outreach to residents and stakeholders who represent the residents, continuing to convene groups of residents on issues outlined in this plan will be imperative.

**LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)**

- SCT will elevate its effort to align with the communities it serves. Through ongoing communications initiatives and opportunities to engage residents in conversations regarding tourism as it continues to evolve, SCT will aim to have greater connectivity with residents.

**SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)**

- Create at least semi-annual opportunities for residents to provide input into SCT’s initiatives, including those outlined in the master plan, to ensure a higher level of understanding and potential support from residents.
- Develop an annual resident sentiment survey to measure how residents feel about SCT and tourism in the county.
- Convene an annual town hall to get resident feedback regarding tourism.
- At least once during the first five years, go out to municipalities and unincorporated areas to engage in a conversation about tourism, mirroring the “Let’s Talk Tourism” initiative.
**IMPERATIVE LONG-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)**

- To continue to showcase the region’s commitment to sustainability and innovation, SCT, in partnership with the Sonoma County Transportation Authority and the Charles Schulz Sonoma County Airport, will send at least semi-annual messages about how Sonoma County’s transportation system is addressing sustainable transportation mandates and innovations.

- Assess, at least annually, SCT’s commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility to ensure all physical spaces, communications, and digital channels are fully accessible. This includes updating the partner toolkit to include issues, policies and opportunities pertaining to DEI+A.

- SCT will continue its commitment to local resident inclusion through holding an annual resident town hall and sentiment survey. Information gathered from each will help inform the programming outlined in the biennial strategic plan.

**IMPERATIVE SHORT-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)**

- To help both SCT and its county-wide partner businesses recognize the importance and need to integrate DEI+A policies, SCT will work to lay the foundation for meaningful programming internally and for partners.

  - Hire a DEI consultant to assist Sonoma County Tourism in identifying and integrating DEI principles and practices into its operation.

  - Complete and put into action an accessibility assessment and plan for improving accessibility.

  - Amplify best practices regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for use throughout the tourism industry and within other sectors as possible.

- Conduct an accessibility assessment to identify how the region can better address “Access for All.”

- Integrate the methodology and create an indicator that shows the gap between wages and housing costs that can be used to engage in living wage discussions.
Sonoma County’s product development has occurred over the years because individuals and developers recognized the overall potential of the destination. As the destination continues to grow, the time has come to take a more surgical and brand-compliant approach to the development of both the built environment and guest experiences. While Sonoma County must continue to offer a full breadth of products and experiences that meet the needs of many visitor sectors, unchecked development could hinder the long-term health of the destination. While retaining independent brand alignment will always be the foundation of any product development, integrating the tourism brand “Life Opens Up” in the look and feel of any product offering will help create clarity with customers that can go a long way toward marketing success.

The action items within this focus area are those that help facilitate development and inform partners in ways that facilitate the permitting process, elevate the brand and ultimately, offer a greater potential for success.
KEY SUCCESS METRICS

- Create a benchmark and realize year-over-year increases in the visitor Net Promoter Score (NPS).
- Increase average visitor length of stay.
- SCT is consulted prior to approval when permits are requested for any tourism-facing property.

BIG AUDACIOUS GOAL

Two new flagged hotel properties that integrate with the assets of the region, align with the SCT brand and offer significant meeting space are built in areas that collect the BIA.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Sonoma County Tourism as DRIVER and PARTNER

KEY SECTORS/PARTNERS

Property developers, city and county permitting agencies, Sonoma County's tourism industry partners.

OVERVIEW

As tourism continues to grow in Sonoma County, ensuring the lodging properties developed and the experiences offered to travelers are equitable and in alignment with the brand will be critical to creating a compelling destination.

STRATEGIES

- Create a more efficient and welcoming permitting process for visitor-facing properties.
- Work with local community groups, MACs, and neighborhood organizations to better understand and mitigate concerns regarding development.
- Educate partners on consumer behavior preferences that help determine the types of experiences offered.
- Identify effective methodology to measure success within both the built environment developers and guest experience creators.
BUILT ENVIRONMENT
As an advocate for the development of properties that match the brand and ensure visitors can best support local businesses, SCT will work more closely with developers to curate projects that align with brand attributes and fill the needs of all traveler types.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)
• Establish relationships with city and county permitting offices to gain a seat at the table as tourism-facing projects are identified, helping ensure input from project inception through completion.
• Encourage the growth of properties that represent growing industry sectors, such as craft breweries and distilleries.
• Continue to provide research identifying traveler preferences to help shape the needs around the built environment.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)
• Expand the lodging options to help ensure Sonoma County’s lodging offerings meet the needs of the brand.
  • Educate elected officials regarding limited-service lodging properties impact on the brand.
  • Work with both city and county permitting agencies to help ensure projects that fill gaps in lodging offerings are given careful consideration.
  • Work with community groups and MACs to help mitigate resident concerns regarding new development.
• Ensure equity and a warm welcome for all by providing lodging and experiences at all price points, including camping, glamping, short-term rentals and hotels.
• Identify and advocate for incentives and/or grants for sustainable development and renovation.

“Sonoma County has always struck me as an ‘older person’s’ travel destination. There needs to be a conscious effort to focus on ‘experiences’ if [we want] to attract the younger generation.”

— Focus Group Participant
GUEST EXPERIENCES
More than ever, travelers are looking for experiences that match their own preferences. Properties looking to curate successful visitor experiences need to think not only about the assets they offer, but how consumer preferences integrate with those assets. Traveler preferences evolve with some frequency. Generational differences, social impacts and global economic realities can shape preferences. SCT is committed to ensuring partners best understand traveler preferences, especially as they relate to wine, food and maker experiences.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)
- SCT will provide ongoing insights and semi-annual experience training for properties to both curate and administer compelling visitor experiences.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)
- Create ongoing research to identify the kinds of experiences travelers are seeking.
- Offer training opportunities for visitor-facing properties to gain insights into creating, communicating and administering compelling visitor experiences.
- Enhance and amplify existing experiences through greater access to diverse visitors.
- Ensure current offerings have signage and guest services in languages that represent visitor audiences (Spanish, German, and French to start).
- Help ensure offerings are provided in systems that work for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and those with limited, low, and no sight.
- Amplify experiences for and outreach to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Build support for the development of agri-tourism experiences, nighttime activities and experiences for younger and more diverse travelers.
- Continue to build a cannabis tourism program.
- Explore additional wellness offerings that match traveler preferences and Sonoma County’s assets.
- Invest in data and research to guide product development gaps and decisions.

IMPERATIVE LONG-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)
- Sonoma County’s visitor-facing businesses are connected to changes in traveler preferences and design experiences that match the visitor while magnifying the assets of the business.
- Visitors rate the unique and exciting experiences in Sonoma County as a key decision driver through annual visitor surveys and other customer monitoring channels.

IMPERATIVE SHORT-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)
- One way to determine if the experiences guests receive are commendable, is to measure the Net Promoter Score (NPS). This showcases whether customers are promoting the brand through their own channels. Throughout this plan, SCT will engage a social media monitoring firm to determine the change in the Net Promoter Score. SCT will strive for year-over-year increases in the NPS.
- Conduct an experience inventory to better understand gaps in visitor product offerings.
  - Address issues around access and accessibility to current experiences and natural and cultural assets.
  - Engage partners in strategic product development.
- Conduct customer preference research to understand existing use patterns and desires of a new demographic.
- Curate and launch with industry partners at least three trails, including culinary, arts and cannabis with associated itineraries.
Sonoma County is home to a tremendous cultural heritage. As home to coastal Indigenous Tribes, immigrants from across the globe, multi-generational agricultural families and innovative artisans, the region is rich with stories and connections to history that can help shape the Sonoma County story. Elevating this history, showcasing pioneers in various sectors and creating pathways for new generations will help Sonoma County weave a more textured portrayal of the region. This ultimately can help outreach to new travelers and bolster the creative economy.
KEY SUCCESS METRICS
• Benchmark and increase year-over-year use of land acknowledgements across tourism industry organizations.
• Add at least 50 oral and written histories representing the central historical communities to SonomaCounty.com.
• Develop at least one cultural trail every two years showcasing the artisans of Sonoma County.

BIG AUDACIOUS GOAL
Sonoma County offers at least two trails and marketable experiences that curate an authentic story of each of the identified communities within its textured history.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
Sonoma County Tourism as an INFLUENCER and PARTNER

KEY SECTORS/PARTNERS
Creative Sonoma, Chambers of Commerce, Sonoma County Tourism (boards and committees), organizations and agencies dedicated to each cultural community.

OVERVIEW
As the storyteller to the region’s visitors, SCT will authentically convey and deliver quality cultural heritage experiences to visitors while respecting and protecting the county’s unique history, lifestyles and cultures.

STRATEGIES
• Collaborate with organizations dedicated to each cultural group to help identify key issues and programming opportunities.
• Partner with Creative Sonoma and other cultural organizations to curate authentic stories about Sonoma County’s history. Showcase these stories through oral and visual histories.
• Conduct research around cultural heritage tourism to better understand what an evolving travel sector wants from a destination to gain a sense of place.
CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Each of Sonoma County’s cultural communities represents a truly unique point of view and contribution to the Life Opens Up brand. Conveying each community in an authentic oral, written and visual depiction will help visitors find the sense of place so important to them, especially cultural travelers.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Work with Creative Sonoma and other county agencies and associations to create recognized Cultural Districts, including in areas serving traditionally marginalized populations, i.e., The Springs, Roseland, etc. Determine if they need to be officially designated through the state’s program or work with local entities on a Sonoma County based definition and resources.

- Develop cultural experiences that represent authentic stories of the experience in Sonoma County and the struggles and triumphs of its diverse communities. Locations for the experiences are identified and stories are secured.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Foster engagement with local Indigenous Tribal communities to identify respectful and appropriate opportunities for cultural heritage tourism and education.

- Align with Creative Sonoma’s Theory of Change and highlight the need for greater awareness of local creative talent and deeper understanding of the value of integrating art into work as more artists in Sonoma County are hired for local work.

- Serve as a conduit to engage arts and culture initiatives with Chambers of Commerce, and further integrate such endeavors with economic development initiatives, tourism convenings, Sonoma County Hospitality Association events and other association events.

- Strengthen partnerships with Sonoma County’s growing Latinx community, including opportunities that provide greater access to experiencing Latin heritage and culture.
HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Sonoma County’s history is a complex one. It’s filled with triumphs of exploration and the human spirit but also obstacles that denigrate cultures and thwart progression. Most tourism-facing historic interpretation favors a positive depiction of history, but SCT is committed to conveying an authentic portrayal of the region’s positive and negative historic narratives.

- Work with centers and individuals to act as monitors to ensure information conveyed across SCT’s channels tells the authentic story of the region and its people.
- Develop interpretive scripts for each trail and determine how to best illuminate the stories.
- Expand the culture component of the Accredited Hospitality Professional Program to ensure hospitality professionals understand and can convey the accurate story of Sonoma County’s history.

LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES (5-10 YEARS)

- Cultivate, gather produce and convey 50 additional oral and written histories on the cultural heritage of Sonoma County and build upon the diverse representation of cultural and historical heritage experiences featured on the SCT website.
- Work with partners to preserve, protect and enhance historic and cultural sites through sustainable policies and stewardship programs.
- Influence development of new or expanded cultural and agricultural heritage tourism experiences to increase non-peak visitation and spending. Elevate the visibility of artistic and cultural creatives as curators and developers of creative experiences in Sonoma County (i.e., artist-curated self-guided creative experiences and tours, insider tips for nightlife from musicians ala the videos from Sonoma Sound, etc.)

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES (1-5 YEARS)

- Connect with county-wide historians to identify oral and written stories that can be integrated into tourism marketing messages.
- Ensure the histories identified are included in SCT’s marketing channels (including the website and the app) and are woven into the Neighborhoods Project.
IMPERATIVE LONG-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)

• Helping visitors find a sense of place is a key reason cultural travelers visit a destination. Cultural Districts can help identify the unique personalities of each. SCT will work with the essential partners to bring these locations to fruition to attract this highly desirable visitor type.

• Trails that depict the cultural history of identified communities are tremendously compelling to visitors and can help showcase Sonoma County to cultural travelers. SCT will work with various communities to develop and promote these trails.

IMPERATIVE SHORT-TERM CRITICAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES (CBOS)

• SCT is engaged with organizations that serve each of the cultural communities within Sonoma County through membership in the organization and participation in at least semi-annual activities.

• Crafting the oral and/or written history of each cultural segment helps create an intentional invitation for visitors and locals to learn more about the people who shaped the region’s history. SCT will work with the communities and the area’s historical societies to showcase these stories.

  • The History/Heritage section of SonomaCounty.com and on the Sonoma County app convey authentic stories and historical references.

• Exploration into the development of cultural trails and experiences has begun with the cultural groups to be highlighted and potential trail systems identified.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AND RESILIENCY MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
Steve Ehert, Sonoma County Regional Parks
Margaret Grahame, Timber Cover Resort / Coast Kitchen
Keo Hornbostel, Safari West
Kirstyne Lange, KAL Consulting, LLC
Sarah Phelps, Sonoma County Regional Parks
Caroline Shaw, E. & J. Gallo Winery

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District 4: Caroline Shaw, E. & J. Gallo Winery
District 5: Kirstyne Lange, KAL Consulting, LLC
District 5: Margaret Grahame, Timber Cove Resort / Coast Kitchen

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS
Bill Arnone, Legal Counsel
Ethan Brown, Interim Executive Director, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
Kristen Madsen, Alternate, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
McCall Miller, Alternate, County Administrator, County of Sonoma
Christina Rivera, County Administrator, County of Sonoma
Claudia Vecchio, President / CEO, Sonoma County Tourism
SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM TEAM
Claudia Vecchio, President / CEO
Lori Angstadt, Vice President, Finance and Operations
Kelly Bass Seibel, Vice President, Community Engagement
Todd O'Leary, Vice President, Marketing and Communications
Jonny Westom, Vice President, Business Development
Conrad Braganza, Senior Manager, Research
Stacey Bruckert, Senior Manager, Business Development
Kira Butz, Business Development Coordinator
Lisa Coats, Accounting Assistant
Kate Davis, Project and Design Specialist
Frank Flicic, Director, Brand Marketing
Delayna Fitzgerald, Communications Manager
Tracy Koch, Administrative Program Manager
Devin McConnell, Manager, Sustainability and Climate Initiatives
Jessica Quigley, Executive Assistant
A.J. Ruiz, Marketing and PR Coordinator
Emma Schmitz, Data and Systems Specialist
Kurt Shaver, Group Business Development Executive
Percy Stevens, Director, Travel Trade
Achilles Stravoravdis, Senior Manager, Digital Marketing
Jamie Trump, Content and Social Media Manager
Birgitt Vaughan, Director of Public Relations
Chris Vomvolakis, Senior Manager, Public Relations

COMMUNITY INPUT
Great thanks to all in the Sonoma County Community who contributed ideas, insights, challenges and direction for this plan.

Craig Anderson, LandPaths
Brian Applegarth, California Cannabis Tourism Association
Ethan Brown, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
Nancy Brown, Ph.D., County of Sonoma Department of Emergency Management
Jennifer Buffo, Pure Luxury Transportation, Inc.
Aphrodite Caserta, Safari West
Frank Chong, Ph.D., Santa Rosa Junior College
Rick Coates, EcoRing
Beth Costa, Wine Road
Supervisor Chris Coursey, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Eddy Cummins, Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART)
Alegria De La Cruz, J.D., County of Sonoma Office of Equity
Raissa De La Rossa, Planning and Development, City of Santa Rosa
Mary Jane Dean, Museum of Sonoma County
Renee Domon-Mouaou, Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center
Andriana Duckworth, Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance
Peggy Flynn, City of Petaluma

Eric Fraser, Truth in Tourism
Supervisor Susan Gorin, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Margaret Grahame, Timber Cove Resort / Coast Kitchen
Liza Graves, Beautiful Places
Judy Groverman Walker, California Artisan Cheese Festival
Neena Hanchett, Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce
Michael Haney, Sonoma County Vintners
Tallia Hart, Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce
Herlinda Heras, Brew HaHa; Craft Beer Hour Radio Show
Herman J. Hernandez, Los Cien
Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Kee Hornbostel, Safari West
Gina Huntsinger, Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center
Randy Johnson, Getaway Adventures
Jen Klose, J.D., Generation Housing
Karissa Kruse, Sonoma County Winemakers
Barbara Lee, County of Sonoma, Climate Action and Resiliency Division
Susan Lee Vick, Hugh Fultrell Corporation (former)
Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Kristen Madsen, Creative Sonoma
Peter Martin, Water Resources, City of Santa Rosa
Jake Martini, Taft Street Winery
Paul Matlock, Summit State Bank
Clay Mauritson, Mauritson Wines
Marie McCusker, Petaluma Downtown Association & Visitors Program
Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
Eric Metz, Jack London State Historic Park
Cynthia Murray, North Bay Leadership Council
Christopher O’Gorman, Rodney Strong Vineyards
Debbie Osborn, Wine Road
Julie Pedroncelli St. John, Pedroncelli Winery
Bob Pullum, Guerneville Bank Club and Russian River Chamber of Commerce
Neal Ramus, Sonoma Land Trust
Edward Roe, Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn
Julie Rothberg, Medlock Ames Winery
Peter Rumble, Santa Rosa Metro Chamber
Kevin Sea, Wine Studies, Santa Rosa Junior College
Caroline Shaw, Marketing & Communications, E. & J. Gallo Winery
Andy Shepherd, Green Music Center, Sonoma State University
Sloan Shinn, Pepperwood Preserve
Ed Skapinok, Appellation Hospitality
Suzanne Smith, Sonoma County Transportation Authority
Jon Stout, Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport
Chris Vomvolakis, Visit Santa Rosa (former)
Eris Weaver, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
Anita Wiglesworth, Luther Burbank Center for the Arts

Sonoma County Tourism would like to thank our consulting firm partners at Coraggio Group for their strategic guidance and leadership of the process of developing this landmark Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan for our region.
APPENDIX A - SUMMARY OF IMPERATIVES, STRATEGIES, SHORT- AND LONG-TERM DELIVERABLES

IMPERATIVE 1
BUILD A NATURALLY RESILIENT DESTINATION

Key Success Metrics
- Realize year-over-year reduction in carbon emissions of the tourism industry and track emission reduction of all industry sectors outlined in this plan.
- Achieve sustainable tourism destination certification through a GSTC-accredited certification body.
- Diversify sources of and increase funding for Sonoma County Tourism by at least 30%.

Big Audacious Goal
Sonoma County becomes the center of global climate change thought leadership through an annual convening of the most forward-thinking agriculture, marine, air and land management innovators.

Strategies
- Integrate programming that works to shift visitor behavior toward more responsible actions and activities.
- Create long-term programs that elevate the commitment to protecting the natural environment and help travelers better appreciate the responsibility we all have to lessen negative impacts and strengthen preservation efforts.
- Ensure SCT and industry partners are prepared to manage and mitigate crises.
- Work to find alternative funding sources for SCT that give the organization greater capacity to withstand funding pressure from any one source.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION/OUTDOOR RECREATION

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):
- Showcase the region as an innovator with key thought leaders. Convene an annual conference dedicated to sustainability and climate change initiatives, discussing impacts on tourism and agriculture-centered regions such as Sonoma County. The conference will become a seminal event across the industry as a think-tank for innovation and resiliency programming.
- Position Sonoma County as exceeding the state and federal compliance timelines for low carbon emissions and carbon offsetting initiatives when possible.
- Work with partners to promote the expansion and integration of clean low-carbon access to the health benefits of the outdoors using SMART, EV program/EV transit, and e-bikes and e-scooters along with maps, apps and incentives across platforms.
- Encourage the development of a trekking program that offers locals and travelers the chance to experience the natural beauty of the county via a network of walking, biking, water trails, lodging options and interpretive programs.
- Enhance wayfinding for outdoor activity through integrations of digital channels/apps that consider environmental impacts while maximizing experiences.
- Collaborate with, cross-market, and support projects and programming that help achieve the goal of being a sustainable destination.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
- Convene leaders of land, water and animal conservation conversations and action planning initiatives to continue moving the region forward as a sustainable travel destination. Identify ways to amplify extended networks to create collective impact.
- Address identified gaps and opportunities outlined in the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) assessment.
- Conduct an accessibility assessment and work to address gaps found.
- Expand visitor education efforts through partnerships and programs that connect directly with visitors and partner organizations.
- Continue to magnify and integrate Leave No Trace initiatives.
• Incorporate digital wayfinding apps and the Sonoma County app in real-time communication and redirection for visitors in-market.

• Continue to identify ways for travelers to reduce their carbon footprint.

• Elevate and continue to communicate carbon emission offset offerings.

• Create a grants program earmarked specifically for properties to incorporate sustainable practices/building practices if SCT elevates its funding level to allow offering grants.

• Continue partnerships with industry organizations: Kind Traveler; Leave No Trace.

• Schedule “Sustainable Destination Missions,” opportunities for Sonoma County stakeholders to visit other destinations that are integrating innovative sustainability and recreation programming into their work.

CRISIS PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

• Continue work with partner agencies to ensure the plan and its communication channels are updated at least annually.

• Ensure the SCT crisis plan is updated each year and all partners, including lodging properties, AVAs, Chambers, Visitor Bureaus are apprised of any revisions.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

• Continue work with County emergency management offices to ensure strong partnership and communications pre-, during-, and post-crises.

• Crisis communication and management plans ensure that all parties are included, updated and educated.

• Continue to promote the advances of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management office in communication (wireless emergency, radio information).

• Align with the Sonoma County Hospitality Association on educational sessions around crisis preparation and management.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

• Secure at least one additional major source of organizational funding per year.

• Pursue competitive federal grants with sufficient Return on Investment, including USDA, Economic Development Administration (EDA) and others as possible.

• Collaborate with partners, local government officials and staff, and others on grants and other funding initiatives.

• Elevate SCT’s connectivity with key stakeholders through engaging in substantive conversations that identify solutions for issues facing the industry.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

• Identify ways to diversify SCT’s budget through funding streams that offer reliable, long-term funds that allow the organization to create robust programming and be able to mitigate external impacts. This will ensure the long-term health of the organization.

• Conduct annual surveys to monitor resident sentiment regarding SCT and its operational effectiveness.

• SCT will identify ways to connect with the local community that address any issues and opportunities highlighted in the survey.

• Ensure annually that SCT has the plan and connectivity to its partners required to handle internal and external crises.
Key Success Metrics

• Increase the percentage of service sector jobs with livable wages/benefits.
• Create and convey messaging and marketing pieces that showcase the quality of life that comes from working and living in Sonoma County.
• Work with applicable business sectors and educational institutions to develop a business development accelerator program specific to people of color, women and those who identify as LGBTQ+

Big Audacious Goal

Build a fully sustainable convention center that can house meetings, corporate training, special events or other convenings. The facility also may be used to house residents during a crisis and will be outfitted to ensure the infrastructure is prepared to provide these critical needs.

Strategies

• Create a built environment that increases Sonoma County’s appeal as a year-round business and leisure destination.
• Forge new partnerships with sectors such as technology, banking and other businesses that can help convey the business/profit story for sustainable and responsible travel.
• Tenaciously monitor industry performance to identify opportunities for growth.
• Continue to monitor and convey performance and recovery of the tourism sector post-pandemic and following any other major impacts to help partner businesses make the needed revisions to their own business plans and prepare for future crises.

CONVENTION CENTER DEVELOPMENT

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

• Work toward the development of a convention center. The development of a convention center complex will require collaboration among a wide array of government agencies, citizen groups and developers. SCT will work to facilitate the entire process from feasibility study to ribbon cutting.
• Identify concession/retail partners and secure facility naming rights.
• Determine long-term center management structure.
• Sell the facility and convention set-up services component of SCT.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

• Work with various business sectors to begin conversations around the feasibility of a convention/conference center complex.
• SCT will work with all entities involved in identifying, funding, building and managing the center to help ensure an efficient process.

CREATIVE ECONOMY

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

• As Creative Sonoma and other arts organizations formally advocate for approval and implementation of a countywide Percent-for-Art Ordinance, which would provide for creation of new art in conjunction with new public capital construction projects, SCT will work to educate its own constituents on the opportunities the ordinance could provide for the community.
• Sonoma County will be a place known for innovative approaches to public facing issues and creative solutions to issues such as homelessness, housing availability and affordability, and climate change.
Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
- Work with Creative Sonoma to elevate its goal that creativity becomes a defining economic driver for Sonoma County.
- Drive demand for and supply of creative services.
- Hire local creatives when possible (graphic designers, film/video/audio professionals, animation, etc.).
- Include work by emerging and established culture workers in all marketing materials.
- Expand the network of creatives that feed SCT marketing and web content, ensuring that creative organizations and individuals are participating in AHP programs, lunch and learns, etc.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):
- While many partners have initiatives in place that strengthen their internal workforce, SCT will monitor and partner with the hospitality industry as a whole to identify ways to enhance the experience of workers in the destination.
- SCT will help bolster the appeal of Sonoma County as a desirable place to work by partnering with the Economic Development Board to create recruitment messaging around what makes Sonoma County a great place to have a career.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
- Explore, encourage, and participate in nontraditional partnerships that involve business, government and education sectors to solve workforce constraints.
- Integrate programs that take advantage of H1 VISA programs to help bring employees from global locations.
- Identify ways the tourism & hospitality industry will address the issue of living wages, helping ensure employees have compensation commensurate with the cost of living in Sonoma County.
- Invite and convene decision-makers for a conversation around workforce needs and gaps.
- Prioritize workforce initiatives that ensure equitable access and affordability.

**VACATION RENTAL COMMUNITY**

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):
- Sonoma County has integrated policies and business practices that, in balance, benefit both vacation rental owners and residents.
- Vacation rental properties and their owners have fully integrated into SCT’s board, committees and marketing channels.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
- Partner with the vacation rental community to help ensure the policies for doing business benefit owner/operators and mitigate impacts to neighborhoods.
- Communicate the value of vacation rentals as an option for lodging in SCT’s marketing channels.
- Forge bonds with the vacation rental industry so that the value of the partnership results in the sector becoming an investor in Sonoma County Tourism’s destination marketing initiatives.
IMPERATIVE 3
ELEVATE THE RESIDENT QUALITY OF LIFE

Key Success Metrics
- Measure and increase the resident sentiment around tourism score.
- Work with the Sonoma Marin Regional Transit (SMART) to identify and communicate “first and last mile” transportation solutions.
- Sonoma County has adequate affordable housing stock for its hospitality and tourism sector workforce.

Big Audacious Goal
Sonoma County has sufficient housing to accommodate residents at all economic levels.

Strategies
- Support transportation infrastructure updates.
- Partner with transportation agencies including the Sonoma County Transportation Authority to provide input from a traveler’s perspective for projects and initiatives that intersect with the visitor experience. Message success around each initiative to help ensure that visitors find a more functional transportation infrastructure in Sonoma County.
- Continue to partner with the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport (STS) to identify innovative initiatives to increase flights, manage issues around flight path noise and communicate sustainability initiatives.
- Participate in efforts to identify affordable housing solutions. Work with government agencies overseeing housing to provide best practices and/or innovative solutions.
- Support efforts to find solutions to the issues surrounding the unsheltered population.
- Work with residents as well as formal and informal groups that allow for resident guidance to create support around the initiatives outlined in this plan.
- Identify gaps in accessibility—physical, cognitive and language—and identify solutions to making Sonoma County fully accessible. Support and integrate DEI initiatives.
- Participate in conversations that help make Sonoma County a more inclusive and equitable environment.
- Continue to monitor SCT’s DEI initiatives to ensure the organization is operating at a high commitment to DEI in its internal and external programming.

TRANSPORTATION

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):
- Continue to monitor regulations around clean air/alternative modes of transportation exceeding the timeframes for integrating statewide policies guiding vehicle emissions.
- Partner with the SCTA and other agencies to message their initiative to create a sustainable future for State Highway 37.
- Partner with the SCTA on messages to visitors as the entire bus fleet is converted to electric vehicles.
- Work with the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport to convey messages as it accomplishes projects that maximize sustainability and increases the solar footprint.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
- Advocate for expanded transportation options (mass transit and non-motor transit such as bicycle infrastructure).
- Align with the Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s 2021 Comprehensive Transportation Plan on key priorities that intersect with the visitor experience, including new bicycle infrastructure, completion of expanded highway corridors, and public transit options.
• Amplify Sonoma County’s appeal as a bicycling destination. Better communicate Complete Streets policies and Priority Development Areas (PDAs), allowing for increased dedicated space for bicyclists and pedestrians.
• Work with the SCTA to communicate public transit services, especially those that interface with visitors.
• Support the SCTA as it works to add more integrated service planning among bus providers, marketing and branding.
• Collaborate with the Sonoma Marin Regional Transit (SMART) to identify opportunities to better serve travelers and market offerings via various SCT channels.
• Work with the SCTA to support point-to-point on-call public transportation pilot opportunities.
• Continue partnerships with existing transportation entities.
• Ensure ongoing participation on the STS Airport Advisory Board, SCTA Citizen’s Advisory Council and other transportation-related committees.
• Work with the airport team to develop a communications strategy that positions the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport (STS) as the regional airport of choice for residents and visitors.
• Align with the STS 2012 20-year master plan and the air service section of the County’s General Plan, including issues around:
• Capacity. Provide STS with the approval to increase the daily aircraft capacity.
• Monitor the progress of the sustainability master plan beginning in summer 2023. Provide data to STS as needed.
• Communicate key projects as the airport continues to grow and improve, including pavement projects, reconstruction projects (runway, taxiways, airline apron, aircraft rescue and firefighting building), consolidated rental car facility (including EV fleets), and solar.
• Convey the quality-of-life attribute of STS for locals, eliminating the need to drive to the city.

**HOUSING**

**Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):**

• Support the development of affordable housing projects and communicate options to tourism and hospitality workers.
• Communicate, in partnership with the County, the initiatives taken to ensure sufficient housing at all economic levels.

**Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):**

• Partner with agencies that assess and redefine housing density expectations.
• Work with hospitality partners to identify creative ways to address workforce housing.
• Identify ways to communicate workforce housing options to tourism and hospitality industry employees.
• Partner with city and county agencies dedicated to addressing the needs of the unhoused community.
• Help agencies understand how business and leisure travelers are impacted by groups of unsheltered people.

**DEI+A**

**Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):**

• Continue to monitor the benchmarks for DEI integration and SCT’s achievement of the goals set forth in the biennial strategic plan.
• Revisit the partner DEI+A best practices on an annual basis to ensure robust participation from partner businesses.
• Continue to encourage the adoption of DEI+A imperatives within partner organizations.
Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

- Increase education and awareness of gaps in diversity of the local communities and the tourism industry.
- Create a directory of accessible tourism businesses, amenities, and experiences into one location that is easy to access and use.
- Incorporate accessibility resources within the inspiration guide and incorporate “Access for All” concepts in all SCT visitor promotion and guidance materials.
- Help ensure the majority of all experiences and built structures are fully accessible by all.
- Continue to update the accessibility assessment as new products and experiences become available to ensure accessibility.
- Expand the Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program to include racial equity training.
- Create additional education on bias for hospitality workers.
- Identify opportunities for elevating conversation and action around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility within all organizations with which SCT collaborates.
- Support and contribute to authentic discussions around DEI+A within the Sonoma County community.
- Ensure the tourism-facing community has the insights needed to incorporate DEI+A components into each organization.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

- SCT will elevate its effort to align with the communities it serves. Through ongoing communications initiatives and opportunities to engage residents in conversations regarding tourism as it continues to evolve, SCT will aim to have greater connectivity with residents.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

- Create at least semi-annual opportunities for residents to provide input into SCT’s initiatives, including those outlined in the master plan, to ensure a higher level of understanding and potential support from residents.
- Develop an annual resident sentiment survey to measure how residents feel about SCT and tourism in the county.
- Convene an annual town hall to get resident feedback regarding tourism.
- At least once during the first five years, go out to municipalities and unincorporated areas to engage in a conversation about tourism, mirroring the “Let’s Talk Tourism” initiative.

IMPERATIVE 4

ENHANCE THE BREADTH OF PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES

Key Success Metrics

- Create a benchmark and realize year-over-year increases in the visitor Net Promoter Score (NPS).
- Increase average visitor length of stay.
- SCT is consulted prior to approval when permits are requested for any tourism-facing property.

Big Audacious Goal

Two new flagged hotel properties that integrate with the assets of the region, align with the SCT brand and offer significant meeting space are built in areas that collect the BIA.
**Strategies**

- Create a more efficient and welcoming permitting process for visitor-facing properties.
- Work with local community groups, MACs, and neighborhood organizations to better understand and mitigate concerns regarding development.
- Educate partners on consumer behavior preferences that help determine the types of experiences offered.
- Identify effective methodology to measure success within both the built environment developers and guest experience creators.

**Built Environment**

**Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):**

- Establish relationships with city and county permitting offices to gain a seat at the table as tourism-facing projects are identified, helping ensure input from project inception through completion.
- Encourage the growth of properties that represent growing industry sectors, such as craft breweries and distilleries.
- Continue to provide research identifying traveler preferences to help shape the needs around the built environment.

**Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):**

- Expand the lodging options to help ensure Sonoma County's lodging offerings meet the needs of the brand.
- Educate elected officials regarding limited-service lodging properties impact on the brand.
- Work with both city and county permitting agencies to help ensure projects that fill gaps in lodging offerings are given careful consideration.
- Work with community groups and MACs to help mitigate resident concerns regarding new development.
- Ensure equity and a warm welcome for all by providing lodging and experiences at all price points, including camping, glamping, short-term rentals and hotels.
- Identify and advocate for incentives and/or grants for sustainable development and renovation.

**Guest Experiences**

**Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):**

- SCT will provide ongoing insights and semi-annual experience training for properties to both curate and administer compelling visitor experiences.

**Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):**

- Create ongoing research to identify the kinds of experiences travelers are seeking.
- Offer training opportunities for visitor-facing properties to gain insights into creating, communicating and administering compelling visitor experiences.
- Enhance and amplify existing experiences through greater access to diverse visitors.
- Ensure current offerings have signage and guest services in languages that represent visitor audiences (Spanish, German, and French to start).
- Help ensure offerings are provided in systems that work for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and those with limited, low, and no sight.
- Amplify experiences for and outreach to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Build support for the development of agri-tourism experiences, nighttime activities and experiences for younger and more diverse travelers.
- Continue to build a cannabis tourism program.
- Explore additional wellness offerings that match traveler preferences and Sonoma County’s assets.
- Invest in data and research to guide product development gaps and decisions.
IMPERATIVE 5
ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADVANCE SONOMA COUNTY’S CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Key Success Metrics
• Benchmark and increase year-over-year use of land acknowledgements across tourism industry organizations.
• Add at least 50 oral and written histories representing the central historical communities to SonomaCounty.com.
• Develop at least one cultural trail every two years showcasing the artisans of Sonoma County.

Big Audacious Goal
Sonoma County offers at least two trails and marketable experiences that curate an authentic story of each of the identified communities within its textured history.

Strategies
• Collaborate with organizations dedicated to each cultural group to help identify key issues and programming opportunities.
• Partner with Creative Sonoma and other cultural organizations to curate authentic stories about Sonoma County’s history. Showcase these stories through oral and visual histories.
• Conduct research around cultural heritage tourism to better understand what an evolving travel sector wants from a destination to gain a sense of place.

CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):
• Work with Creative Sonoma and other county agencies and associations to create recognized Cultural Districts, including in areas serving traditionally marginalized populations, i.e., The Springs, Roseland, etc. Determine if they need to be officially designated through the state’s program or work with local entities on a Sonoma County based definition and resources.
• Develop cultural experiences that represent authentic stories of the experience in Sonoma County and the struggles and triumphs of its diverse communities. Locations for the experiences are identified and stories are secured.

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):
• Foster engagement with local Indigenous Tribal communities to identify respectful and appropriate opportunities for cultural heritage tourism and education.
• Align with Creative Sonoma’s Theory of Change and highlight the need for greater awareness of local creative talent and deeper understanding of the value of integrating art into work as more artists in Sonoma County are hired for local work.
• Serve as a conduit to engage arts and culture initiatives with Chambers of Commerce, and further integrate such endeavors with economic development initiatives, tourism convenings, Sonoma County Hospitality Association events and other association events.
• Strengthen partnerships with Sonoma County’s growing Latinx community, including opportunities that provide greater access to experiencing Latin heritage and culture.
HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Long-term Deliverables (5-10 years):

- Cultivate, gather produce and convey 50 additional oral and written histories on the cultural heritage of Sonoma County and build upon the diverse representation of cultural and historical heritage experiences featured on the SCT website.
- Work with partners to preserve, protect and enhance historic and cultural sites through sustainable policies and stewardship programs.
- Influence development of new or expanded cultural and agricultural heritage tourism experiences to increase non-peak visitation and spending. Elevate the visibility of artistic and cultural creatives as curators and developers of creative experiences in Sonoma County (i.e., artist-curated self-guided creative experiences and tours, insider tips for nightlife from musicians ala the videos from Sonoma Sound, etc.).

Short-term Deliverables (1-5 years):

- Connect with county-wide historians to identify oral and written stories that can be integrated into tourism marketing messages.
- Ensure the histories identified are included in SCT’s marketing channels (including the website and the app) and are woven into the Neighborhoods Project.
ncompassing 1,575 square miles in northwestern California, Sonoma County is known for its natural beauty, rural charm, and unique ecosystems that include mountains, redwoods, rivers, valleys, and fifty-five miles of coastline. Sonoma County also offers amazing wines and legendary vineyards. Sonoma County Tourism (SCT) serves as the official Destination Stewardship Organization dedicated to promoting overnight stays and creating a sustainable hospitality economy in Sonoma County, California.

Sonoma County Tourism, the nation’s first Destination Stewardship Organization, embarked on this assessment to understand Sonoma County’s compliance with the GSTC globally recognized destination Criteria. And, as such, is one of thirty-six destinations globally, who has embarked on the GSTC assessment.

The GSTC Destination Assessment is designed to introduce Sonoma County to the core elements needed for development of sustainable policies and practices by applying the GSTC Criteria. The Sonoma County assessment process allows a destination to participate directly in GSTC application of the Criteria to the destination, to understand Sonoma County’s sustainability status against the world’s leading standard, and to identify areas for improvement based on the GSTC Criteria.

The results and recommendations of this assessment supply context and suggested direction on how SCT can Lead, Partner, or Influence stewardship support as it relates to the recommended priorities among GSTC’s four destination pillars: Sustainable Management, Socio-Economic Sustainability, Cultural Sustainability, and Environmental Sustainability.

GSTC destination assessor, Dr. Kelly Bricker, completed this objective assessment of the management of Sonoma County’s compliance to the GSTC Destination Criteria (GSTC-D), the global standard for sustainable destinations.

Dr. Bricker led the assessment with the full support of Sonoma County Tourism. The assessment consisted of an extensive desktop analysis of current tourism activities and management approaches, and a four-day on-site visit involving interviews with local authorities and stakeholders to objectively verify evidence of compliance with the GSTC-D V2 Criteria. The findings of Dr. Bricker’s efforts are provided in this report.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The GSTC-D V2 consists of four pillars: (A) Sustainable management; (B) Socioeconomic impacts; (C) Cultural impacts; and (D) Environmental impacts. Sonoma County scored very well in the assessment. For example, within the A-Sustainable Management pillar, Sonoma County scored an average of 2.60, which shows “Excellent Performance” overall. Within the B-Socioeconomic and C-Cultural pillars, the averages were 2.53 and 2.42, respectively, demonstrating “Good Performance”. And, within the D-Environment pillar, Sonoma County scored 2.61, indicating “Excellent Performance” overall.
### SECTION A: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

#### AREA OF FOCUS: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE & FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1. Destination management responsibility</strong></td>
<td>a. Documentary evidence showing relevant make-up and responsibilities of the group.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. A financial plan and budget showing current and future funding sources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Evidence of links and engagement with other bodies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Records of permanent staff and contracted personnel, indicating relevant experience.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Management guidelines and processes, which demonstrate awareness and adherence to sustainability principles and transparency in operations and letting of contracts.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2. Destination management strategy and action plan</strong></td>
<td>a. A published document setting out the current destination strategy and action.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. The strategy/plan clearly visible and available online.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Evidence of stakeholder consultation, meetings etc. in developing the plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Reference to sustainability principles and an assessment of assets, issues and risks, contained in the strategy and action plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Specific references in the strategy/action plan to wider sustainable development policy (including pursuit of the SDGs), and vice versa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3. Monitoring and reporting</strong></td>
<td>a. Specific quantifiable socio-economic, cultural and environmental indicators and targets identified.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Measurement against these indicators, with results recorded and publicised at least annually.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Written evidence of monitoring and reporting of actions and outcomes.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Previous reviews of monitoring system and schedule for future reviews.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### AREA OF FOCUS: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A4. Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards</strong></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Evidence of regular communication of sustainability issues to tourism-related businesses (media, meetings, direct contact etc.).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sustainability support and advice to tourism-related business—available and promoted.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards (and whether GSTC recognised/accredited), with targets for wider outreach.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Evidence of promotion of certification schemes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e</td>
<td>List of tourism-related certified enterprises, kept up to date.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A5. Resident engagement and feedback</strong></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Evidence of the promotion and facilitation of public participation in destination planning/management.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Information on the type and level of such participation.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Surveys of residents and other systematic feedback mechanisms, covering tourism issues.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Evidence of action taken in response to residents’ feedback.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Program of information, education and training on tourism provided for residents.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A6. Visitor engagement and feedback</strong></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Visitor surveys (and other feedback mechanisms)—carried out and reported.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Surveys and feedback includes visitor reaction to sustainability issues.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Evidence of actions taken in response to visitor survey/feedback findings.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Examples of visitor information that covers sustainability issues and how to respond to them.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A7. Promotion and information</strong></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Current information and promotional material with appropriate content.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>A process exists for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of destination promotion and information.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Evidence of consultation with local communities and environmental and cultural bodies on communications content and delivery.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Focus: Managing Pressure and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A8. Managing visitor volumes and activities</td>
<td>a. The destination management strategy and action plan addresses seasonality and spread of visitation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Variation in visitor volumes throughout the year is monitored, including in the most visited locations.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Impacts of visitor volumes and activities are identified through observation and community and stakeholder feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Actions taken to manage visitor flows and impacts.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Marketing strategy and selection of target markets takes account of visit patterns, the impact of activities and destination needs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9. Planning regulations and development control</td>
<td>a. Specific policies/regulations/guidelines which control development—documented and identified by title and date.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Impact assessment requirements are set out, covering environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts, at sufficient scale to address long term issues for the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Specific regulations on property rental and operation for tourism, with evidence of their application and enforcement.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Evidence of public participation in the development of policies/regulations/guidelines.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Evidence of consultation with, and consent from Indigenous people or minority ethnic groups when tourism development has been proposed or has occurred in their territories.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Evidence of communication and enforcement of the policies/regulations/guidance, at planning, development and implementation stages</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10. Climate change adaptation</td>
<td>a. The destination management strategy and action plan identifies and addresses climate issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Regulations, guidelines and zoning for tourism development and activities accommodate the consequences of climate change.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. A climate risk assessment, covering current and future risks—undertaken and made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Evidence of consideration of impact on, and contribution of, local ecosystems to climate change adaptation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Information on climate change that has been made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11. Risk and crisis management</td>
<td>a. A documented risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan for tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. The plan recognises a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, terrorism, health, resource depletion, and others appropriate to the location.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Communication procedures identified for use during and after an emergency.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Program for local delivery of information and training on risk and crisis management.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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## SECTION B: SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

### AREA OF FOCUS: DELIVERING LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1. Measuring the economic contribution of tourism</strong></td>
<td>a Program of economic data gathering.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Annual reports on the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Data covering a range of measures of economic impact (e.g. volume, expenditure, employment, investment and spread of economic benefit in the destination).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B2. Decent work and career opportunities</strong></td>
<td>a Provision of relevant skills training programs/courses, available locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Statements of commitment by tourism enterprises to the provision of decent work/career opportunities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Training and employment opportunities promoted to and taken up by local people, including women, young people, minorities and people with disabilities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Channels for checking working conditions and receiving/handling grievances (e.g. involvement of labour unions).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B3. Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade</strong></td>
<td>a Advice, finance or other support—available in the destination for tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Assistance with market access for local tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Action to encourage and assist local tourism enterprises to purchase goods and services locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Initiatives to help local farmers, artisans and food producers to engage in the tourism value chain.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Local produce and crafts identified, promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AREA OF FOCUS: SOCIAL WELLBEING AND IMPACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Score</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B4. Support for community</strong></td>
<td>a Support for local community and sustainability initiatives by local tourism enterprises is encouraged and facilitated.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Schemes exist, and are promoted, for visitors to support local community and sustainability initiatives.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Volunteering and engagement with the community does not involve intrusion or exploitation.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Average per Criteria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B5. Preventing exploitation and discrimination</strong></td>
<td>a Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding human rights, exploitation, discrimination and harassment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of communication and enforcement of above laws and related good practice (including to tourism enterprises and visitors).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Risk and impact analysis regarding human rights, including human trafficking, modern slavery and child labour – conducted regularly.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Destination and key tourism players are signatories to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B6. Property and user rights</strong></td>
<td>a Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding property rights and acquisitions and user and access rights to resources.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Reference in the above laws to communal and Indigenous rights, public consultation and resettlement.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence of enforcement of the above laws in the context of tourism development and activity.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of community consultation, consent and compensation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B7. Safety and security</strong></td>
<td>a Security and health services are well established and active in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b The needs of visitors are identified and addressed in the delivery of security and health services.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Tourism facilities are inspected for compliance with safety and hygiene standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B8. Access for all</strong></td>
<td>a The existence of any regulations and standards regarding the accessibility of visitor sites, facilities and services.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Consistent application of accessibility standards in public facilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Data on the extent/proportion of visitor sites and facilities that are accessible.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of programs to improve access for people with a range of access needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Information on accessibility included in communications about the destination as a whole.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f Details of accessibility included in visitor information about key sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
### SECTION C: CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

#### AREA OF FOCUS: PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1. Protection of cultural assets</strong></td>
<td>a Lists of cultural assets, including evaluation and indication of vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program of rehabilitation and conservation of assets.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of cultural assets.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C2. Cultural artifacts</strong></td>
<td>a Reference to relevant laws relating to historical artifacts pertaining in the destination (title, date)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of communication of relevant laws to tourism enterprises and visitors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence of enforcement of relevant laws.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C3. Intangible heritage</strong></td>
<td>a Identification and listing of intangible cultural heritage</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Examples of celebration and visitor experiences of intangible cultural heritage (events, distinctive products etc.).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence of involvement of local and Indigenous communities in developing and delivering visitor experiences based on intangible cultural heritage.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Feedback from visitors and local communities on delivery of intangible heritage experiences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C4. Traditional access</strong></td>
<td>a Monitoring of accessibility to natural and cultural sites for the local community.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of engagement with the local community regarding traditional access.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Specific action to protect and/or rehabilitate local community access.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C5. Intellectual property</strong></td>
<td>a Reference to laws on intellectual property pertaining in the destination (title, date).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Communication of intellectual property rights to tourism stakeholders.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence that intellectual property rights are protected in the development of cultural experiences for visitors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
### AREA OF FOCUS: VISITING CULTURAL SITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C6. Visitor management at cultural sites</td>
<td>a Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on cultural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of action to manage tourism-related impacts in or around cultural sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites and cultural events and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at cultural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Provision of training for guides.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7. Site interpretation</td>
<td>a Provision of informative interpretative material on site and in formats that are accessible pre-arrival.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence that interpretative material has been well researched and is accurate.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Interpretation material that identifies the significance and sensitivity/ fragility of sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of host community collaboration in preparation of relevant interpretative material.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Interpretative material available in relevant languages.</td>
<td>2</td>
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### SECTION D: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### AREA OF FOCUS: CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE

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<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1. Protection of sensitive environments</td>
<td>a List of natural heritage sites and assets, indicating type, conservation status and vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Programs to conserve biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Programs to eradicate and control invasive species.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Action to identify, monitor and mitigate tourism impacts on biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of natural assets.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f &quot;Communications with visitors and enterprises on reducing spread of alien species.&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
### D2. Visitor management at natural sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on natural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Evidence of action to manage and mitigate tourism-related impacts in or around natural sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites, and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at natural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Cooperation with local conservation bodies to identify environmental risks associated with tourism and measures to reduce them.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Provision of training for guides.</td>
<td>1</td>
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### D3. Wildlife interaction

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Reference (title, date) to international, national and local laws that apply in the destination regarding interaction with wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Endorsement of international standards for wildlife viewing for both marine and terrestrial species.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Distribution of a code of practice for wildlife interaction, including viewing, which reflects international standards.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>System for checking compliance with regulations, and code of practice amongst tourism operations.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Actions to monitor wildlife wellbeing and minimize disturbance, in locations where interactions occur.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Provision of information to visitors on harmful wildlife interaction, such as touching and feeding.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D4. Species exploitation and animal welfare

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Reference (title, date) to specific international, national and local laws, standards and guidelines that apply in the destination regarding animal welfare and conservation of species.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Notification of laws, standards and guidelines to tourism enterprises and guides.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>A system for inspection of the conditions of captive wildlife and domestic animals, including their housing and handling.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Licensing and checking of qualifications of personnel responsible for captive wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Action to promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in the tourism sector and to ensure compliance with it.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Provision of information to visitors on avoiding trade in endangered species, e.g. in purchase of souvenirs derived from threatened species of wildlife notified by IUCN or CITES.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Enforcement of legislation to ensure that any hunting activity is part of a scientifically based, properly managed and strictly enforced approach to conservation.</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
## AREA OF FOCUS: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D5. Energy conservation</strong></td>
<td>a Energy consumption targets are publicised and promoted.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program to increase energy efficiency - e.g. promoting and supporting insulation.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Investment in renewable energy and percent of total provision/consumption.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Support and incentives for energy monitoring and reduction by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D6. Water stewardship</strong></td>
<td>a Provision of guidance and support for monitoring and reduction of water usage by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program to regularly assess water risk.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Setting, publication and enforcement of water stewardship goals, where water risk has been assessed as high.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Monitoring and control of sources and volume of water used for tourism purposes and its effect on local communities and ecosystems. Promotion and checking of adherence to goals by tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Visitor information on water risk and minimising water use.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D7. Water quality</strong></td>
<td>a Program of water quality monitoring.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Existence of data and reports on water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Monitoring bathing water, with certification and identification of sites reaching set standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of actions to improve water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Information for visitors on quality of local drinking water, to encourage use as alternative to bottled water.</td>
<td>3</td>
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## AREA OF FOCUS: MANAGEMENT OF WASTE AND EMISSIONS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D8. Wastewater</strong></td>
<td>a Written guidelines and regulations on wastewater treatment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b System of enforcing guidelines amongst enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Monitoring/testing of released wastewater.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Provisional of sustainable municipal water treatment systems, for use by the tourism sector, where practical and appropriate.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B (Continued)

#### D9. Solid waste

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Waste monitoring program, with results and targets published.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Coordinated campaign advice/support with tourism enterprises on waste management, including food waste.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Campaign to reduce/eliminate single use items, especially plastics.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Waste management program for public offices and facilities.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Provision of a collection and recycling system, with at least four streams (i.e. organic, paper, metal, glass and plastic).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Provision of sustainable system for disposal of residual waste.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Campaign to eliminate dropping of litter, including by visitors, and to keep public spaces clean.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Adequate bins for separated waste disposal.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D10. GHG emissions and climate change mitigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Published target for percentage of emissions reduction by specified date.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Annual climate report, including monitoring and mitigation actions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Supported campaign or other engagement with tourism enterprises on reduction and mitigation of emissions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Action to reduce emissions from public sector operations.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Information for enterprises and visitors on offsetting schemes that meet recognised standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D11. Low-impact transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Investment in more sustainable transport infrastructure, including public transport and low emissions vehicles.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Information promoted to visitors on alternative transport options to and within the destination</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Data on visitor use of alternative transport modes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Improvement and promotion of cycling and walking opportunities.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Prioritization of visitor markets accessible by short and more sustainable transport options.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Public sector and tourism enterprises prioritise low-impact transportation in their own operations.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D12. Light and noise pollution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Guidelines on light and noise pollution – produced and promoted to tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Identification and monitoring of potential sources of noise and light pollution related to tourism.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Mechanisms to enable residents to report noise and light pollution, with follow-up action.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Total Criteria per category

| A=11 | B=8 | C=7 | D=12 |

#### Total Indicators per category

| A=51 | B=32 | C=26 | D=65 |

#### Total Criteria

| 38 |

#### Total Indicators

| 174 |
Sonoma County

SENTIMENT STUDY

Sonoma County Sentiment Study

OVERVIEW

APPROACH
Support the Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan by analyzing the visitor voice surrounding key attributes (research facets below) to understand the opportunities and risks for Sonoma County.

1. Approve the research question
2. Define the competitive set
3. Collaborate on keyword set for each facet
4. Analyze social sentiment, volume of conversation and sample visitor conversations (recommended timing: Jan 2021 - May 2022)
5. Compare and contrast Sonoma County with the competitive set
   a. Key social metrics
   b. Audiences
6. Identify opportunities and risks for Sonoma County

RESEARCH FACETS
- Sustainability
- Experience
- Outdoor Recreation

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OVERALL FEEDBACK + THEMES FOR DISCUSSION
Throughout the study we will call out specific areas where we would like SCT input on how to proceed; the following apply to multiple facets throughout the study:

1. Include Sonoma County only as there are multiple areas where we believe the finding may lead to reframing the facet in order to make it more actionable and future focused.

2. Fires and wildfires find their way into multiple facets. Approach: filter these conversations to only apply to extreme weather and their prevalence throughout the research facets.

3. Recommend complementing facets with low volumes of conversations with secondary research, but by being mindful of how this may impact your scope of work. We will call out these specific facets as we review them.

Research Facet: Sustainability
What facets of sustainability have the greatest impact on travel intent?

Approach
Focus this segment of the study on the facets of sustainability visitors are most likely to post about on social media by paying special consideration to the behaviors influencing travel intent. The first part of the study analyzes the sustainability conversation of Sonoma County compared with the competitive set (up to three competitors). Then the audiences (the people contributing to this conversation) will be compared and contrast including demographics, psychographics and motivators.

Sustainability Facets
- **Sustainable management**: visible green practices by hotels and the ability to travel with a light carbon footprint (transportation), leave no trace, visitor management, limited reservations, gating for natural experiences.
- **Sustainable viticulture**: First sustainable wine region in the world; wine making practices, visitation to organic + natural wineries.
- **Extreme weather**: wildfires, drought, earthquakes and how these events impact travel intent and planning.
Recommend complementing this analysis with search trends data and supporting industry data.
Research Facet: Experience

What are the greatest product development opportunities?

Approach
This portion of the study will focus on understanding the experiences Sonoma County can own and leverage to differentiate the destination from the competition. Researching and analyzing opportunities for growth and strengthening position within known experiences and product-market fit within emerging experiences.

Experience Facets
- **Wine:** wineries, brands and personalities driving visitation
- **Culinary:** dining options, restaurants and personalities increasing Sonoma County’s brand value
- **Wellness:** spa, retreats, workout and natural beauty improving visitors health outcomes
- **Cannabis:** product and experiences resonating with the luxury traveler
Wildfires are prevalent in the wine conversation.

Research Facet: Experience
CULINARY
APPENDIX C
(CONTINUED)

Research Facet: Experience

WELLNESS

Recommend complementing with search trends data and industry data

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Research Facet: Experience

CANNABIS
Research Facet: Outdoor Recreation

How does the Sonoma County outdoor recreation product compare with competitors?

Approach
This portion of the study focused on how Sonoma County’s outdoor recreation product compares with the competitive set by analyzing what matters to Sonoma County visitors by paying particular attention to opportunities for differentiation from the competitive set. Additionally, this facet helps to provide guidance for conservation and or dispersion efforts.

Outdoor Recreation
- **Cycling**: cycling, road races, training, safety, routes, mountain biking, terrain, trails, parks, facilities etc
- **Hiking**: hikes, trails (maintenance, variety, difficulty), backpacking etc
- **Coastal Recreation**: beaches, fishing, boating, dunes, camping, birdwatching, whale watching, kayaking, stand up paddle boarding etc
Another facet where fires have changed the tone of the conversation, by adding industry trends and focusing on this summer, we could potentially make all of the outdoors more future focused and actionable.

While this research facet was aimed at capturing online sentiment about coastal recreation, we see evidence that the cost of coastal living has entered the conversation.
Our social listening methodology

HUMANS, NOT DATAPoints

Sparkloft Media has developed a proprietary Social Listening process that goes beyond standard positive, negative, and neutral Sentiment Analysis.

To begin tracking social volume and sentiment over time, custom designed boolean “queries” were be created to capture all publicly available conversations across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TripAdvisor, Tumblr, Pinterest, TikTok hashtags + comments, review sites, blogs, and forums. Then, the data was be cleaned, and AI technology assisted in sorting and analyzing the platforms, audience demographics, sentiment, posting frequency, common language and emoji usage , and volume over time.

WHY SOCIAL LISTENING + SENTIMENT ANALYSIS?
Consumers think differently now. Social listening can help you to understand them on a human level and provide data-driven decision making. Through the social insights we'll provide, we can track consumer shifts to ensure actions and messaging are relevant and timely. Social listening helps us debunk these emotional barriers/motivators that we can activate to prompt the audience to take your desired business action.
Figure 1 – Hospitality Industry Employment
Are you or a member of your family employed in the hospitality industry?

Yes 28%
No 72%

N = 485

Figure 2 – Region of Residence
What is your zip code?

Coast and Sea Villages: 5.8%
Redwoods and Rivers: 22.0%
Valleys and Vineyards: 69.7%
Out of State: 3.1%

N = 482
Figure 3 – Sustainable Tourism Priorities
Please share what you believe are the three most important priorities for Sonoma County as we work to achieve a sustainable future of tourism over the next decade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Stewardship and Resource Conservation</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Affordability</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Transportation Infrastructure</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Tourism Drivers Outside Wine Industry</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce Crime and Homelessness</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Tourism Doesn’t Overrun Residents</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit Growth and Preserve Community/Region Culture</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage Visitor Volumes and Traffic</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit Vacation Rentals</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 – Sonoma County Values
What are some values we share in Sonoma County that differ from others places, communities, and destinations in the United States?

- Environmental Stewardship and Resource Conservation
- Improve Affordability
- Improve Transportation Infrastructure
- Develop Tourism Drivers Outside Wine Industry
- Reduce Crime and Homelessness
- Ensure Tourism Doesn’t Overrun Residents
- Limit Growth and Preserve Community/Region Culture
- Manage Visitor Volumes and Traffic
- Promote Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation
- Limit Vacation Rentals

N = 498
Figure 5 – Future Tourism Concerns
What, if anything, concerns you about the future of tourism in Sonoma County? N = 553

- Overdevelopment and Overcrowding: 27%
- Unsustainable Resource Use: 15%
- Rising Cost of Living: 14%
- Negative Impacts on Residents: 12%
- Too Many Vacation Rentals: 12%
- Increased Crime and Homelessness: 8%
- Insufficient Attraction Diversity Outside of Wineries: 7%
- Impacts of Climate Change: 7%
- Insufficient Infrastructure: 4%
- No Concerns: 3%
- Lack of Government Support for Tourism: 3%
- Lack of Marketing: 2%
- Economic Downturns: 1%

Figure 6 – Improvements from Tourism
How could tourism improve the quality of life and livelihood for you and your community? N = 543

- Support Local Businesses and Livelihoods: 34%
- Increase Public Funds for Community: 17%
- Strengthen Local Culture and Identity: 12%
- Promote Sustainable Activities and Development: 11%
- It Can’t: 11%
- Improve Residents’ Job Opportunities: 10%
- New Attraction and Event Development: 8%
- Ensuring Balance with Local Community Needs: 8%
- More Outdoor Recreation and Management: 4%
- Diversify and Expand Tourism Marketing: 3%
Figure 7 – Advice for Long-Term Success

If you could give Sonoma County one piece of advice to help ensure the long-term success of the Sonoma County tourism economy, what would it be?

N = 441