

# THE SONOMA COUNTY RESILIENCE FUND

FEBRUARY 2018 LISTENING SESSIONS  
SUMMARY REPORT



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## Introduction

Community Foundation Sonoma County has raised more than \$13 million dollars to support the recovery and rebuilding efforts after the devastating wildfires in October 2017. The purpose, goals, and strategies of the Foundation's new Resilience Fund will be determined with input from various community and nonprofit leaders.

In February 2018 the Community Foundation hosted 10 listening sessions to hear from the nonprofit community their thoughts on the following three questions:

- When it comes to community-wide issues related to the fires, what concerns you most?
- What ideas or solutions do you have to those issues?
- What role could the Community Foundation play in the recovery process?

A total of 172 individuals representing 123 nonprofits participated. The ten listening sessions were held in five different regions of the county:

- **North Sonoma County:** at Healdsburg Community Center in Healdsburg
- **Central Sonoma County:** at Social Advocates for Youth in Santa Rosa
- **Sonoma Valley:** at La Luz in Boyes Hot Springs
- **South County:** at Mentor Me Petaluma in Petaluma
- **West County:** at Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation in Sebastopol

# Concerns:

Participants were first asked to list their concerns related to community-wide issues after the fires. These were then discussed and themed in both small and large groups. The following issues were brought up in at least 50% of the listening sessions; concerns are listed from most-discussed to least-discussed.

## Housing

In every listening session, housing was brought up as the primary concern; participants noted that we had a housing crisis before the fires that was made exponentially worse by the disaster. The concerns touched on many aspects of housing in our community, from the challenges of housing pre-fire homeless to affordable housing for low-income people to the impacts of higher-income residents who opt not to rebuild. Several participants voiced concern about the impact of the housing shortage on particular groups, such as students, renters, the homeless and low-income families. In particular, the following concerns were reiterated throughout the listening sessions:

- **Affordable Housing:** The loss of affordable housing and the impact that will have on low-income people
- **Workforce Housing:** Lacking sufficient housing for construction workers to help with the rebuilding process, and lack of sufficient housing for current workforce
- **Homelessness:** The likelihood of an increase in homelessness in our community as a result of the fires; those who were previously homeless will have an even harder time getting into housing

## Mental Health

In nine out of the ten listening sessions mental health was discussed as a top concern, with participants stating that we have suffered a community-wide trauma and many people have been impacted, whether or not they lost their homes in the fires. The most frequently voiced concerns around mental health were:

- **Funding Cuts:** In nearly every session, the cuts to county mental health funds were mentioned as a major concern; one participant defined this as a ‘crisis on top of a crisis’
- **Ripple Effects of Trauma:** A broad swath of our community will need mental health services to address trauma, from direct fire survivors to first responders to teachers and nonprofits who are serving fire survivors.
- **Long-Term Impacts:** Concern about the long-term effects of untreated trauma and mental health issues such as higher rates of homelessness, addiction, dropping out of school, incarceration, etc.

## Nonprofit Impacts

The participants in the listening sessions were representatives from nonprofit agencies, so naturally the impacts of the fires on nonprofit services and capacity was a key concern, discussed in eight out of the ten listening sessions:

- **Fundraising:** Funds re-directed away from core programs to address fire-related needs, competition for limited resources, donor fatigue, and donors who lost homes moving away
- **Capacity:** Nonprofits are seeing an increased demand for their programs, and are concerned about their capacity to scale up, including being able to raise funds and hire staff to meet demand
- **Collaboration:** Given the increased demand and lack of sufficient funds for services, nonprofits have a great need for collaboration and coordination to ensure services are not duplicated

## Economic Impacts

In seven out of the ten listening sessions participants brought up concerns about the economic impacts of the disaster on the community long-term. The concerns primarily centered on the rippling-out effects the housing shortage would have on the economy:

- **Current Workforce;** As the housing market becomes tighter and rental prices increase, we may see a 'brain drain' of skilled workers such as doctors, nurses, and teachers, a 'compassion drain' in the nonprofit sector, and a severe loss of low-income service sector and agricultural workers
- **Workforce to Rebuild:** There was a particular concern about the need for an additional 19,000 construction workers over the next three years to rebuild lost homes
- **Changing Demographics:** We may see a loss of vitality and diversity in our community if low and middle income people are forced to move out of the area

## Environmental Impacts

In seven out of the ten listening sessions environmental issues were brought up as concerns. These included:

- **Rebuilding Efforts:** Concern that homes are being rebuilt in fire-prone areas without consideration of the likelihood of future fires, and the need to support homeowners in fire-proofing their homes and landscapes
- **Natural Resources:** The impacts of the fires on watershed health, particularly water and air quality
- **Education:** The need for education and awareness-raising about what it means to live in a fire-adapted landscape

# Vulnerable Populations

In about half of the sessions participants discussed how the fires have disproportionately impacted low-income and other vulnerable populations. Concerns for the long-term included:

- **Recovery Process:** Ensuring the voices of those most marginalized are able to authentically participate in recovery efforts and that decisions are made with them rather than for them
- **Undocumented:** The undocumented community is largely not eligible for government support and may be further marginalized in the recovery; there needs to be a different approach for working with this population

# Emergency Preparedness

Finally, in half of the sessions emergency preparedness was voiced as an issue to be addressed to ensure we are ready for the next disaster, whether that is a fire, flood, or earthquake. The primary concerns were:

- **Lessons Learned:** How do we take what we have learned from this disaster in order to be better prepared for the next one?
- **Comprehensive Planning:** Better preparation is needed to address needs of everyone but in particular for vulnerable populations such as seniors, monolingual Spanish-speakers and people with disabilities
- **Communication:** the communication channels during the disaster were completely inadequate; need to develop better communication tools for the next disaster

# Ideas and Solutions

After discussing concerns, CFSC staff facilitated a large-group discussion about ideas to address the myriad of impacts of the fires. Responses were varied, from high-level concepts to small-scale and practical projects. All ideas and solutions were captured but not themed during this component of the meeting. The following list of ideas relate to the most-discussed concerns listed in the report—housing, mental health, economic impacts, the environment, emergency preparedness and vulnerable populations:

- Address the stigma around mental health to reduce the barrier to people seeking services
- Hire more mental health counselors at schools
- Support trainings on trauma-informed care for schools and service providers
- Help get people out in nature to foster well-being and health; nature as healer
- Work with the arts community to address mental health issues through the arts
- Foster local construction job training programs so we can hire local people for the rebuilding process
- Encourage policies to increase housing density such as permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and tiny homes; address government obstacles to adding these units
- Use city/county vacant lots for temporary housing for fire survivors and for construction industry
- Employ eco-friendly building practices to reduce environmental impacts of rebuilt homes
- Encourage mergers of nonprofits to reduce duplication of services and administration costs
- Support nonprofit workforce's well-being to prevent burnout and turnover
- Create a coordinated entry system for fire survivors to make service navigation easier
- Help people create individual emergency kits to be prepared for future disasters
- Learn from how the Russian River community has recovered from the floods to inform countywide recovery
- Foster public/private partnerships to accelerate recovery process
- Advocate for additional funding at the state and federal level to support recovery and rebuilding

# Opportunities for Leadership

Finally, participants were asked to provide feedback on potential roles the Community Foundation could play in the recovery process. The key themes that emerged all relate in some way to being a conduit of information about the recovery process for the community:

- **Elevating Best Practices:** The Community Foundation is doing a significant amount of research on disaster philanthropy and the recovery process; there is opportunity to share what CFSC is learning with leaders and the broader community to inform recovery efforts
- **Collaboration:** Help to foster strong communication and collaboration among nonprofit providers
- **Convening:** Bring funders, government leaders, nonprofits, and residents together to ensure a well-coordinated and inclusive recovery effort.
- **Data:** Aggregate data about fire needs and share it with the community to inform the recovery process. There are many sources of data but they are disparate and not being collected in a systematic way.

# Thank you to the following organizations who participated in the Listening Sessions:

10,000 Degrees  
Agricultural Community Events Farmers Markets  
Art Escape  
Bancroft Foundation  
Bischoff Consulting  
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Santa Rosa  
Building Trades Training  
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa  
Children's Museum of Sonoma County  
City of Santa Rosa  
Congregation Shir Shalom/ SVTCFB  
COTS  
Earle Baum Center of the Blind  
Face to Face  
First 5 Sonoma County  
Forest Unlimited  
Forget Me Not Children's Services  
Friends of the Mark West Watershed  
Girl Scouts of Northern California  
Global Student Embassy  
Hanna Boys Center  
HANNA Winery  
Healdsburg Education Foundation  
  
Imagine You Project, IMCF  
Interfaith Food  
Jewish Community Federation  
Jewish Community Free Clinic  
Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit  
KRCB - North Bay Public Media  
La Luz  
LandPaths  
LifeWorks of Sonoma County  
Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic  
Luther Burbank Center for the Arts  
Mentor Me Petaluma  
North Bay Organizing Project  
Petaluma Ecumenical Properties  
Petaluma Health Care District  
Raizes Collective  
Rebuilding Together Petaluma  
Redwood Empire Food Bank  
Restorative Resources  
  
4Cs Sonoma  
Alliance Medical Center  
Artstart  
Becoming Independent  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley  
Buckelew Programs  
California Human Development  
Center for Well-Being  
Cinnabar Arts Corporation  
Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County  
Corazon Healdsburg  
Dovetail Learning, Inc.  
Everybody Is A Star  
Farm to Pantry  
Food for Thought  
Forestville United Methodist Church Food Closet  
Friends in Sonoma Helping (FISH)  
Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center  
Girls on the Run Sonoma County  
Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County  
Hanna Institute & HeART Without Borders  
Healdsburg Community Center  
Healdsburg Sustainable Design Team Steering Committee  
Integrative Medical Clinic Foundation  
International Institute of the Bay Area  
Jewish Community Center Sonoma County  
Jewish Family and Children's Services  
Kid Scoop News  
KSVY 91.3 FM radio  
Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation  
Legal Aid Of Sonoma County  
Lilliput Families  
Los Cien Sonoma County  
Matrix Parent Network  
NAMI Sonoma County  
Pepperwood  
Petaluma Educational Foundation  
Petaluma Sunrise Rotary Foundation Inc  
Reach For Home  
Redwood Community Health Coalition  
Redwood Gospel Mission  
Roc Sonoma



Russian River Rotary Foundation  
Santa Rosa Arts Center  
Santa Rosa Community Health  
Santa Rosa Symphony  
Shebang Ventures  
Sonoma Community Center  
Sonoma County DHS  
Sonoma Co. Rotary Clubs  
Sonoma Land Trust  
Sonoma Resource Conservation District  
Sonoma Valley Education Foundation  
SOS Community Counseling  
Summer Search  
The Living Room  
The Salvation Army  
Valley of the Moon Natural History Assoc.  
Vintage House  
Walking Elephant Theatre Company  
West County Community Services  
Women's Recovery Services

Russian Riverkeeper  
Santa Rosa Children's Chorus  
Santa Rosa Metro Chamber/Mike Hauser Academy  
Senior Advocacy Services  
Social Advocates for Youth  
Sonoma County Bike Coalition  
Sonoma County Legal Services Foundation  
Sonoma Ecology Center  
Sonoma Overnight Support  
Sonoma State University  
Sonoma Valley Fund  
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Sunny Hills Services  
The Lost Church / Railroad Square Music Festival  
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