

## Key Agreements at June 5 meeting: Next Steps post Forum and Survey

Board members: Joshua, Katherine, Dennis, Kimberly, Art, Peg, Richard (and guest Caitlin Cornwall)

At Sonoma Valley Fund's April 29 Community forum, attended by about 150 people, we intentionally asked the community to surface and discuss an array of issues concerning the future of Sonoma Valley and its roughly 40,000 residents. We at Sonoma Valley Fund wanted to hear about both the bright spots and the challenges facing the Valley. In particular, we were hoping to complicate the community's thinking by looking at economic, social and environmental issues that are usually looked at separately rather than together.

Based on the input we received, we next put together a survey, to gather additional input and to begin to shape and prioritize our own next steps. This survey was sent to all registered participants at the April 29 meeting, and was publicized on Sonoma Valley Fund's website and by both the Chamber of Commerce and the Sonoma Index Tribune.

We were very happy with both the quantity and the quality of the response we received. Nearly 250 people filled out the survey, including almost half of those who attended the April 27<sup>th</sup> launch of the Community Conversation series. While those who responded to the survey were not fully representative of the population of the Valley<sup>1</sup> the survey results were nevertheless interesting, rich and helpful in continuing to build both direction and momentum for action. The five issues cited as most critical to the future of the Valley by those who responded to the survey were:

- Creating a Sustainable Water Resource
- Creating Activities and Opportunities for Youth
- Building/finding more affordable housing
- Building strong relationships between the Latino and Non-Latino communities
- Guiding the future of the Sonoma Developmental Center for maximum benefit to the community

While all five of these issues were rated as 'Most Important' or 'Important' by a large majority of survey responders, sustainable water was ranked number 1 in the survey by a large margin. The other four issues were closely clustered behind it in importance.

As we look ahead, Sonoma Valley Fund plans to work simultaneously on three separate tracks:

- 1) We will work to **enhance the input** we have been gathering through various means by making it more inclusive of viewpoints not yet represented, especially in the "Springs" communities. We need to keep listening and learning from a variety of diverse perspectives.
- 2) Even as we continue to fill critical gaps in our overall understanding, we plan to **move forward on the issue that ranked highest in the survey**—far higher than any other. That issue is **Sustainable Water Resource**. We are planning another community forum in the fall that will complement other efforts, as we seek to advance our understanding of both short and long term dimensions of water sustainability. We may plan other short-term actions as we continue to listen and learn.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey results represented an oversampling of older, better-educated and wealthier residents with corresponding under sampling of Latino and younger communities.

- 3) At the same time, we will **begin working on a longer term approach** that will help build the community's will and capabilities to address both the most pressing issues, and how they inter-relate. We will reach out to others (both private groups and public officials) already working, as we seek to explore how Sonoma Valley Fund can best take action and add value to existing efforts.

The Sonoma Valley Fund continues to believe that the time is right for more concerted and coordinated efforts to shape the future of Sonoma. The response we have received to both the Community Conversations launch and the survey indicate the growing interest and concern shared by many people.