



LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025



SANTA ROSA METRO CHAMBER

LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025

We support policies that are consistent with the creation of a vibrant urban core, significantly increased housing for all income levels, a more diversified and inclusive economy, and a strong workforce.

We believe this will create a healthy business environment and thriving community for all. We will endorse policies and practices that support business start-up, innovation, expansion and attraction. We believe that the best policies use a data driven, evidence-based approach.

The Policy Platform includes nine issue areas, with a limited number of focused objectives. The goal of our Policy Platform is to establish a focused framework for developing and responding to local, state and national issues that positively or adversely affect our community and our members.

The Metro Chamber uses its Policy Platform to inform communication with elected leaders and members, and

to guide its engagement on community efforts.

Thank you to the member representatives of the Metro Chamber's Advocacy Council, who volunteered their time and expertise in the establishment of this Local and State Policy Platform.

Economic Development & Business Support

We support policies that encourage and enable businesses to locate, expand, and prosper in our community. These policies should be designed to ensure that local existing businesses, diverse startups, and businesses of all sizes have access to the resources, opportunities and workforce they need to innovate and sustainably grow. We believe a strong

business community, and economy is one which enables a thriving community and prosperity for all.

Government

A high-performing, responsive, and responsible government is essential to the success of our community. At its best, local government is regionally collaborative and creates policies to encourage economic development and business attraction, expedite housing development, provide safety and community services, maintain recreation facilities, and other vital services for residents.

Downtown

A vibrant downtown is crucial in recruiting a high-quality workforce and for existing

and new business development, providing recreation and retail opportunities for residents, and providing attractions for tourism. Investment downtown represents an opportunity to generate lasting benefits including thriving employers and access to good jobs, environmentally sustainable development, and increased tax revenue. Economic studies conducted by the City of Santa Rosa demonstrate the highest tax return and property value are in the city's downtown areas, providing the highest economic return on investment.

Housing

Our housing crisis is the greatest threat to our long-term economic, business, and cultural success. The Chamber will advocate for incentives and opportunities that create more housing of diverse types at all market levels and will organize the private sector to support new housing development at all market levels. Crisis after crisis has exposed how fragile our housing infrastructure is to economic fluctuations. Without significantly expanding housing supply for our residents, housing scarcity and housing costs will continue to be an overwhelming burden to many and make future disasters more acutely painful for our community.

Homelessness

The causes of homelessness are multi-faceted and require that multiple levels of support be made available. Our region needs a comprehensive strategy as well as a commitment to, and regional collaboration on, a strategic homelessness plan. We support policies, partnerships, and funding to increase our stock of housing for low- and extremely-low-income individuals and families. We support enforcement policies for people who refuse shelter and to ensure that supportive services to address mental illness and drug dependency are not elective. Funding should support safe and structured short- and

long-term interim solutions to the homelessness challenges that are having a negative impact on our entire community.

Energy & Natural Resources/Disaster Preparedness

The extraordinary quality of the physical environment of our region is critical to the quality of life we enjoy. It also underpins various sectors of our local economy, particularly our tourism and recreation industries. Successful resiliency planning requires that we include our region's energy and natural resources including awareness of threats and opportunities. The droughts and fires we have experienced in recent years highlight the need to use our natural resources in a manner that is sustainable in the long-term and to promote land use and management practices and building codes that minimize the impact of natural disasters. Moreover, based on the experience of Sonoma County in combination with the experience of Mendocino, Lake, and Napa Counties, it has become clear over the last several years that natural disasters have become a part of living in this region. This fact underscores the need for response, mitigation and preparedness for fires, floods, and earthquakes, and to address as ongoing efforts rather than one-off projects.

Education

We support investments that will strengthen access to quality early child care, early education, and K-12 education; that address the teacher shortage; and that align postsecondary programs with employer needs, including a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and CTE (career technical education) opportunities. CTE opportunities for students are crucial to integrate real world examples and opportunities that help all students graduate from high school college- and career ready.

Transportation

Over the past few years, there have been many significant improvements to our transportation infrastructure, and funding is now in place to properly maintain and upgrade our long-neglected roads; however, there is ongoing work to be done. Investment in and maintenance of our transportation systems are critical for the health and growth of our economy. We support transportation policies and funding that increase mobility, relieve congestion, and expand alternative commute options. We support continued improvement to the collaboration between agencies to improve the overall transportation system, including connectors between different modes of public transportation, while making our region more competitive for funding opportunities.

Tourism

Sonoma County's allure as a global destination for high-end wines, craft beer, outdoor recreation, and cutting-edge cuisine is a critical component of the region's ongoing economic success. Large employers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs all rely on the strength of the local tourism economy, which generates over two billion spent annually by visitors to Sonoma County, and also provides amenities and recreation opportunities for locals. While Sonoma County has a diverse economy, tourism is foundational to it. Investment in the industry, the arts, and in special events must be encouraged to help the industry continue to recover as quickly as possible, and will play a critical role in our local, regional, and state level economic success.

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50 Old Courthouse Square, Suite 110, Santa Rosa, CA 95404
P 707-545-1414 | F 707-545-6914
SANTAROSAMETROCHAMBER.COM



LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS SUPPORT



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These policies should be designed to ensure that local existing businesses, diverse startups, and businesses of all sizes have access to the resources, opportunities and workforce they need to innovate and sustainably grow. We believe a strong business community, and economy is one which enables a thriving community and prosperity for all.

Business Retention & Recruitment

Local policies, tools and services should be designed to help local companies become more competitive and grow and thrive where they are rather than relocate. Local government should work collaboratively with the Chamber and other groups in attracting new employers and industries to Sonoma County that can increase local wages and generate new economic growth. We support:

- Investments in infrastructure that will help attract desired businesses with good paying jobs and development that will generate the tax base to sustain and produce a return on those investments.
- Prioritization of general maintenance and appearance of high-foot-traffic areas to enhance the customer experience. Ensuring clean sidewalks, addressing homelessness in business corridors, and other measures that create a more welcoming aesthetic will contribute to a vibrant economic environment that supports business recruitment and retention.
- Partnerships to create business accelerator and incubator programs to advance the successful development of startup and fledgling companies by an array of targeted resources and services to support local entrepreneurs and attract start-up companies from the greater Bay Area.
- The installation of tax credits and incentives to eligible businesses that encourage job creation—particularly focused on good paying jobs—workforce development, and business growth and investment. Strong relationships between local businesses, government, and the community will foster prosperity community wide.

As the economy changes and consumer patterns evolve, it will be important to protect key community sectors to healthy communities whose business models have been impacted, such as health and human services, and arts and culture. The health and human services sectors are indispensable pillars of a thriving community, allowing individuals to lead fulfilling and productive lives, improving community health, and enhancing overall quality of life. The arts sector and cultural initiatives foster community engagement and contribute to economic growth by attracting tourists, supporting local businesses, and creating jobs while enhancing quality of life.

Local Business Preference

Numerous economic impact studies cite an economic multiplier effect when local governments spend their money with local businesses that in turn rely on local supply chains boosting local economic activity, employment, and tax revenue. Local governments must maximize use of local business to fulfill logistical, material, food, medical, professional services, and other needs not available within the local governments' normal functions. Project Labor Agreement policies represent a choice to limit competition, even among employers of a local skilled workforce, and to spend more tax-payer dollars to complete local projects. We've seen local PLA policies eliminate local contracts for local workers, and we know that this can stifle innovation, limit opportunities for locally owned small and minority owned businesses, and hinder economic growth. PLA policies undermine our ability to maximize taxpayer dollars and to foster a competitive and vibrant local economy.

Development/Construction Fees

To ease our housing crisis, government should do what it can to offset the impact of inflation and rising interest rates by reducing fees for multifamily housing development and refraining from imposing new or increased permitting, local development impact, or other construction related fees for a meaningful period of time.

Local Media

A free press that covers community issues is a cornerstone of our democratic government. A strong local media environment is not only essential for an informed public but also closely tied to a healthy local economy. It plays a pivotal role in fostering a thriving community by facilitating the flow of information, encouraging dialogue, and ensuring accountability.

Local journalism is fundamental to well-functioning government and public oversight. Without it, communities experience weaker financial oversight of taxpayer dollars, higher borrowing costs, and decreased civic engagement.

We support investments and protections that sustain a strong local journalism presence to serve as a check on government operations and financial management. Furthermore, we recognize and uphold the critical importance of free speech as a foundational element of democracy and economic prosperity.

The other eight sections of this platform are inextricably linked to our economic success.

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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 GOVERNMENT



A high-performing, responsive, and responsible government is essential to the success of our community.

At its best, local government is regionally collaborative and creates policies to encourage economic development and business attraction, expedite housing development, provide safety and community services, maintain recreation facilities, and other vital services for residents.

Budget

We support budget policies that maintain core services, public safety, infrastructure, and economic development while controlling spending. Santa Rosa’s—and other city budgets—should balance expenditures with existing revenue and should include investment in a sustainable reserve. As local governments face significant budget deficits, it is critical to identify reforms and spending reductions through streamlining of processes, utilization of technology and efficiencies through performance metrics accountability. While reducing expenses is critical, not all budget cuts are equal—while some may provide short-term savings, cuts to critical areas like infrastructure and economic development can lead to significantly higher costs in the long run. Neglecting investment in these areas today can result in deteriorating systems, reduced economic growth, and the need for more expensive repairs or interventions in the future. We must focus on lasting solutions towards fiscal stability that will help us attract businesses, grow the tax base, and encourage economic development opportunities across the city.

Given that both sales tax and property tax are key revenue sources for the City, priority should be placed on increasing both as economic development opportunities. By encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized land, we can maximize the stable property tax revenue, while also boosting sales tax through business growth. Strengthening these revenue streams will support sustainable finances, prepare the city for future challenges, and foster lasting economic recovery.

Community Safety

Public safety agencies must continue to be responsive to community needs, evolving with expectations and technology. Strong public safety agencies are critical to the well-being of communities. The Chamber will continue to support the efforts of local public safety agencies to deter criminal behavior while building and maintaining the public’s trust.

Accountability and Transparency

The process of creating policy solutions should be data-driven and include input from the business community and topically related industry and sector experts. Government staff should be consistently responsive to policy direction as set by elected officials, be accountable to using a quantitative evidence-based approach when tasked with exploring policy solution models, carry out work that advances established policy, and bring forward program recommendations that support established policy.

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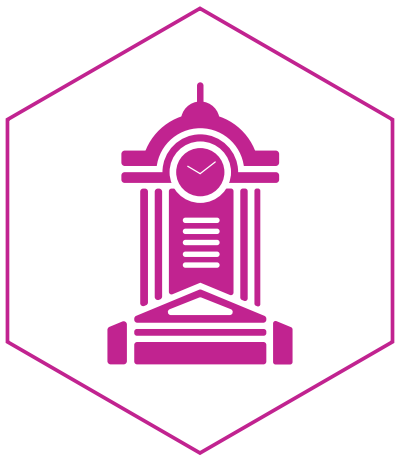
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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 DOWNTOWN



A vibrant downtown is crucial in recruiting a high-quality workforce and for existing and new business development, providing recreation and retail opportunities for residents, and providing attractions for tourism.

Investment downtown represents an opportunity to generate lasting benefits including thriving employers and access to good jobs, environmentally sustainable development, and increased tax revenue. Economic studies conducted by the City of Santa Rosa demonstrate the highest tax return and property value are in the city’s downtown areas, providing the highest economic return on investment.

Creating a destination for residents and visitors alike in the downtown core can boost economic activity and vibrancy. This includes expanded public art, enhanced pedestrian level lighting, walkable spaces including temporarily closing streets for pedestrian access and expanded commerce, downtown safety, and incentives for businesses providing services and activities in the downtown core that enhance downtown vitality.

Downtown Development

To capture the return on investment to develop Courthouse Square, we support using city resources in the form of land and/or incentives to encourage critical housing and commercial developments downtown.

Placemaking is a critical driver of economic development, as it attracts and retains new businesses, boosts tourism, and fosters a sense of pride and engagement among local residents. By creating vibrant, welcoming spaces, we can enhance the downtown experience, leading to long-term benefits for the community. Key initiatives that contribute to placemaking include:

- Expansion of housing opportunities downtown
- Incentives for employment opportunities downtown
- Support for events and cultural opportunities
- Beautification, lighting, and wayfinding improvements
- Addressing public safety issues

- Addition of essential services, such as grocery stores, performing arts venues, and meeting/event spaces
- Utilization of government land for housing and redevelopment opportunities

Together, these placemaking efforts yield a strong return on investment by enhancing the downtown’s appeal, safety, and accessibility—making it a destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. They increase property values, expand the residential tax base, attract new employers and jobs, and reduce commuting, all of which stimulate local spending and support small businesses. By driving tourism, foot traffic, and cultural engagement, and by transforming underused spaces into vibrant hubs of activity, these initiatives generate sustained economic growth through increased sales and property tax revenues—ensuring a dynamic, resilient future for our community.

Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs) provide the ability of property tax increment financing of critical infrastructure costs in defined areas. EIFDs provide a dual benefit of revenue for these improvements along with cost avoidance for housing and commercial projects, which in combination provide significant incentives for needed development imagined by the Downtown Specific Plan, and other planned development areas in the city. The Chamber supports this approach for downtown as well as Roseland and other potential areas in Sonoma County.

Santa Rosa and Sonoma County lose significant convention business to other areas of California and the country due to a lack of adequate convention space. Downtown Santa Rosa is an ideal location for the development of a convention center based on the proximity of parking, commercial, arts, restaurant, and retail opportunities. The development of a convention center would have a profound positive impact on the vitality of downtown Santa Rosa as well as the regional economy.

Support of our small downtown businesses is key to economic growth and vibrancy. Further, available commercial space in the downtown core should be leveraged to attract new business to Sonoma County with changing workforce and transportation patterns post-pandemic having broadened the options for a company’s base of operations and making Sonoma County an increasingly attractive and financially sensible option. We encourage timely direction of park development fees from downtown projects to art, parks and recreation facilities within the downtown core.

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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 HOUSING



Our housing crisis is the greatest threat to our long-term economic, business, and cultural success.

The Chamber will advocate for incentives and opportunities that create more housing of diverse types at all market levels and will organize the private sector to support new housing development at all market levels. Crisis after crisis has exposed how fragile our housing infrastructure is to economic fluctuations. Without significantly expanding housing supply for our residents, housing scarcity and housing costs will continue to be an overwhelming burden to many and make future disasters more acutely painful for our community. We support housing policies to improve the time, certainty, and cost of housing development by streamlining and reducing the cost of the entitlement and permitting processes, including increasing by right development opportunities, easing zoning constraints, increasing ministerial review opportunities, and decreasing subjective input to and unfunded mandates on housing developments to meet our local and regional housing needs.

Housing Production

As we work to address our historic housing shortage and affordability crisis, we support the production of diverse housing types to meet a wide range of affordability and demand. Plans and policies in Santa Rosa should reflect a commitment to pro-housing policies. In addition to policies that directly encourage development projects, opportunities for housing production can be maximized by actively seeking funding opportunities and competing for the millions of dollars available in the state's various housing grant programs. We commend the city's work to earn the state's Prohousing Designation, which will in turn increase its competitiveness for such grants. Still, we recognize that the city's designation was granted based on many programs and policies that are yet to be implemented and urge the city to work expeditiously to implement these programs and policies along with the prohousing policies set forth in the city's Housing Element. Additional opportunities with city, school district, and all public land should be explored and assessed for housing development. We support incentives for in-fill and affordable housing including reducing fees for affordable and workforce housing, and the encouragement of ADUs.

Permitting and Regulation

We began to see immediate benefits from the updating and passage of the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan to support needed development and streamlining of the local permitting process to encourage housing development. It is critical that these streamlined policies are implemented with oversight for consistency at a department level to be sure they are being prioritized as intended and to maintain the trust and certainty they were meant to create. Additionally, similar improvements to the entitlement process are critical to gain process consistency and create needed certainty for developers throughout the city and in priority development areas. Lack of certainty is burdensome for all developers and particularly stifling to development below market rate.

Housing developers, other homebuilding industry professionals, and internal staff have recommended empowering a high-level staff person to align and coordinate departments with an eye toward increasing efficiency in the entitlement and permitting processes.

The misuse of CEQA is obstructing housing development, contributing to our insufficient housing stock, high development costs and high home prices. CEQA must be modernized to preserve the law's original intent while preventing abuse for purposes unrelated to environmental protection. CEQA amendments must be addressed to streamline the process and to ensure it is not an obstacle for high density development, particularly for in-fill urban development.

Rent Control

The preponderance of evidence and research show rent control and just cause eviction laws do nothing to provide housing, reduce homelessness, or provide affordable housing for renters, and experts agree that these policies exacerbate housing shortages. Home development at all market levels—from deed restricted affordable to market rate—is the most effective way to ease the cost of housing. Support for tenants under financial strain needs to come with public funding so that rental housing providers aren't forced to sell their homes resulting in substantial and lasting loss to our rental housing stock.

Just cause eviction and local habitability related laws are superfluous to the strong tenant protections existing under California law. Adding unnecessary local regulation grows the city's budget, increases the workload of city departments, adds to the county courts' congestion, and threatens the profitability of rental housing. Unnecessary local regulation hurts all rental housing providers instead of targeting the few bad actors.

The city would be better served by a modestly priced public information campaign designed to inform tenants of how to avail themselves of the legal protections.

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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 HOMELESSNESS



The causes of homelessness are multi-faceted and require that multiple levels of support be made available.

Our region needs a comprehensive strategy as well as a commitment to, and regional collaboration on, a strategic homelessness plan. We support policies, partnerships, and funding to increase our stock of housing for low- and extremely-low-income individuals and families. We support enforcement policies for people who refuse shelter and to ensure that supportive services to address mental illness and drug dependency are not elective. Funding should support safe and structured short- and long-term interim solutions to the homelessness challenges that are having a negative impact on our entire community.

Enforcement, Services and Housing

We support aggressive action locally to secure funds for shelter and wraparound services as the first step to getting people experiencing homelessness back into our society, increased support for local behavioral health (i.e., mental health and substance abuse) services, and best practices advice to local jurisdictions to assist them in grappling with this challenge. This funding must be tied to data and to accountability, prioritizing programs that have demonstrated results, such as the “Be Well” center in Southern California. County funding should support proven local jurisdictional programs for shelter and prevention services.

Addressing unlawful behavior is not the criminalization of homelessness itself. We support law enforcement efforts to stop and prosecute property and violent crime and to stop risky health and safety conditions throughout the community including our homeless population. We support proposals for conservatorship reform and the institution of conservatorship programs so that those who are unable to make decisions for themselves due to behavioral health issues are provided care rather than left to live on the street.

Increased housing production is key in addressing the homelessness crisis, with an emphasis on building housing that is affordable for low-income residents. A comprehensive approach to increased housing options should

include additional interim and long-term solutions such as tiny homes, sanctioned camp sites, RV and car parking locations. We encourage incentives, protecting dedicated local housing funds, and securing partnerships and initiatives to build or repurpose shelter for the unhoused with wraparound services.

While shelter is a critical foundation for services to be effective, the way that Housing First has been implemented, decoupling housing from services, ignores the root causes of homelessness. This has been expensive, ineffective, and is not setting up our community or our most vulnerable for success.

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ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



The extraordinary quality of the physical environment of our region is critical to the quality of life we enjoy.

It also underpins various sectors of our local economy, particularly our tourism and recreation industries. Successful resiliency planning requires that we include our region's energy and natural resources including awareness of threats and opportunities. The droughts and fires we have experienced in recent years highlight the need to use our natural resources in a manner that is sustainable in the long-term and to promote land use and management practices and building codes that minimize the impact of natural disasters. Moreover, based on the experience of Sonoma County in combination with the experience of Mendocino, Lake, and Napa Counties, it has become clear over the last several years that natural disasters have become a part of living in this region. This fact underscores the need for response, mitigation and preparedness for fires, floods, and earthquakes, and to address as ongoing efforts rather than one-off projects.

Minimizing Risk of Fires

Over the past decade, California has seen a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. To help mitigate the risk locally, we support the implementation of the Wildfire Action Plan adopted by the Chamber's Advocacy Council. The plan includes: vegetation management and fire safety; reduction of the volume of combustible materials in the forests and woodlands of Sonoma County; reduction of the impact of new development in WUI areas; and improvements to the electric distribution system.

Hardening of the electric distribution system is critical to lessen the likelihood of fires being initiated and the impact of Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. With losses in the millions of dollars per PSPS event, we support investments in hardening, microgrids, and other energy back-up solutions. Major upgrades to the electric utility transmission and distribution system undertaken over the past five years have helped reduce the likelihood that transmission and distribution lines will start fires and have also reduced the extent of PSPS events. These upgrades must continue until the entire system has been hardened.

Water and Environment

Our region suffers from repeated cycles of drought. Climate change appears to be aggravating the severity of droughts leading to significant strains on water supply after repeated drought years. The health of our region relies upon continuous availability of water resources. For this reason we need to increase the water resources available to our region and continue to promote recycling, efficiency, and the retention of water for future use. Protection of our natural resources, and adequate water supply, in Sonoma County is vital to numerous industries, including tourism, hospitality, recreation, and agriculture. The Chamber supports policies that help preserve these assets in partnership with the industries that rely on them and employ significant numbers of our community members.

It is important that Sonoma Water's budgets and rates are aligned with the capital and operating expenses needed to prudently manage our water system. Repeatedly deferring maintenance of critical public infrastructure and putting off replacing aging equipment results in long-term costs that end up greatly outweighing the short-term savings. We encourage Sonoma Water and its contractors to develop budgets and rates in the coming years that accomplish this and to work together to educate the public as to the need for higher rates to properly fund the operation of our water system.

Clean Energy

We support incentives for investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency that engage the private sector to work toward California's goal of net zero emissions. Support investments to modernize electric grid infrastructure and expand renewable energy supplies and delivery capacity. This investment and private sector innovation will be critical to create the needed systems, products, innovations, and infrastructure to reach our clean energy goals. The sunset of solar incentives based on Net Energy Metering has created a significant chilling in the rate of solar adoption. Federal, state, and local governments should provide financial incentives to individuals and businesses to support the widespread adoption of solar energy.

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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 EDUCATION



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Early Care & Education

We know that high-quality, affordable, and accessible child care has a significant impact on the economic growth and competitiveness of our companies and economy, and yet child care is difficult to find and afford for most families. Labor force participation of working parents has faced a steep decline since the start of the pandemic. Our child care crisis is damaging the productivity and strength of our workforce. In terms of our future workforce, studies show that investments in early education set the foundation for learning, ensure school readiness, and narrow the persistent achievement gap for the region's most vulnerable children. This is the best investment we can make locally to improve outcomes that increase cost savings in education, health, economic productivity, and crime reduction.

We support policies that encourage an investment in quality early education and care, including the expansion of high-quality preschool. We support efforts that strengthen California's birth-through-third-grade mixed delivery infrastructure, particularly critical as Transitional Kindergarten is implemented. Failure to invest meaningfully in child care will irreparably damage California's already fragile child care system, immediately hindering our current workforce and creating long-term negative effects for our future workforce, while stifling California's economic recovery.

K-12 Education & Postsecondary Access

Improved preschool through third grade (P-3) alignment within school districts and engaging students in STEM subjects during these early years are critical building blocks for future success. At the high school level, we support the alignment of A-G requirements and CTE opportunities, so that all students will have access to pathways to sustainable jobs and careers, and support efforts to leverage our region's higher education opportunities that meet our region's workforce demands for education and training in science, technology, engineering and math. Equitable distribution of

resources, including broadband access, is crucial. We support improved collaboration at all points of the cradle to career continuum. We support the active effort of our local school districts to learn from the robust data obtained through the YouthTruth survey to inform the improvement of curriculum, school culture, and staff professional development.

Higher Education

We support funding for higher education and improved collaboration across education and workforce sectors. Postsecondary education drives economic development, and Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University are tremendous assets in our region. These systems represent opportunities for our residents to secure meaningful employment, to launch a next generation of entrepreneurs and job creators, and to provide the skillbuilding, certificate, and degree programs required to support our diverse local economy.

Youth Mental Health

Experts agree that child and youth mental health is at crisis-level concern. In Sonoma County, high school students are failing classes at rates never before seen in our community. Sonoma County high school students who participated in the national YouthTruth survey over the last few years have reported "feeling anxious about the future" as their number one barrier, and our incoming workforce has the highest numbers of anxiety, depression, and stress ever recorded. With rates of anxiety, depression and suicidality on the rise, we support policies and funding to provide social emotional wellness and mental health resources for students such as mental health screenings, suicide prevention, and extended learning opportunities that address the pandemic learning loss and that help students to feel connected to their future potential. Our educational institutions and elected school officials must do better to care for our kids.

School Safety

School Board members and district leadership must prioritize above all else the safety and security of students. School safety lays the foundation for a learning environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Removing political rhetoric and implementing evidence based school safety programs is critical to ensure that interventions and responses to safety events are grounded in research, and proven effective in prevention, intervention, and support services. Utilization of Resource Officers and implementation of restorative justice programs are not mutually exclusive. Meaningful and appropriate levels of investment in any program, particularly safety programs, must be made to achieve success. Without sufficient resources allocated across all aspects of school safety, critical gaps remain, leaving students and staff vulnerable to potential threats and feeling unsafe. Acting swiftly to implement a school safety program is essential to ensure the protection and well-being of students and staff. While it takes time to implement a comprehensive school safety program this should be done as quickly as possible, and when possible, should be guided in large part by the recommendations collaboratively developed by school safety focused student, staff, and parent committees. In the interim, there must be immediate implementation of a plan to: alleviate pressure on educators to fill this role without support or resources; act on violent offenses; protect students from campus violence; and to provide consistent, dedicated on campus support.

We support policies that are consistent with the creation of a vibrant urban core, significantly increased housing for all income levels, a more diversified and inclusive economy, and a strong workforce. We believe this will create a healthy business environment and thriving community for all. We will endorse policies and practices that support business start-up, innovation, expansion and attraction. We believe that the best policies use a data driven, evidence-based approach.

The Policy Platform includes nine issue areas, with a limited number of focused objectives. The goal of our Policy Platform is to establish a focused framework for developing and responding to local, state and national issues that positively or adversely affect our community and our members.

The Metro Chamber uses its Policy Platform to inform communication with elected leaders and members, and to guide its engagement on community efforts.

Thank you to the member representatives of the Metro Chamber's Advocacy Council, who volunteered their time and expertise in the establishment of this Local and State Policy Platform.



LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 TRANSPORTATION



Over the past few years, there have been many significant improvements to our transportation infrastructure, and funding is now in place to properly maintain and upgrade our long-neglected roads; however, there is ongoing work to be done.

Investment in and maintenance of our transportation systems are critical for the health and growth of our economy. We support transportation policies and funding that increase mobility, relieve congestion, and expand alternative commute options. We support continued improvement to the collaboration between agencies to improve the overall transportation system, including connectors between different modes of public transportation, while making our region more competitive for funding opportunities.

Transportation funding sources must be maintained as this is critical to our economic success. The elimination of gas and other taxes, while attractive short-term options in times of economic hardship, create significant funding shortages to complete critical infrastructure projects. Funding should ensure long-term stability of our roads, bridges, and infrastructure, all necessary to support a vibrant economy.

Airline Attraction

We support the expansion of flights and destinations for, along with the modernization and terminal expansion of, the Charles M. Schulz– Sonoma County Airport. With each new route, our airport estimates an average of \$23 million in economic value including 70 jobs in our community. In addition, connecting to new destinations enhances our ability to attract new employers and bolster our tourism industry.

Road Improvements

Investments in local road repair and maintenance improve safety and movement of traffic, improving the travel experience for locals and visitors alike. We support investments in city and rural road maintenance. We support reconstruction of Highway 37 to withstand sea level rise and storm surges, to relieve congestion, and to improve safety. Growing housing demand has increased this priority as a local workforce issue. Average annual daily trips are projected to increase from 45,000 in 2013

to 58,000 by 2040. We would support alternative financing and project delivery methods including public private partnerships to address this crucial infrastructure need.

SMART

From freight rail to commuter and recreational transportation, we believe that SMART has an important role to play in the future of transportation in the North Bay. We are committed to advocate for increased transparency and fiscal responsibility and for resources to improve the customer experience and increase usage through shortened transfer times, final mile gaps solutions, and needed expansion, such as the Larkspur connection, as well as east to major metropolitan connectors.

Safety

In addition to the moral imperative to prioritize road safety, there is an economic case. Safer roads and improved pedestrian safety bolster tourism and contribute to a positive perception of a destination for locals and visitors alike. We support policy and infrastructure improvements to reduce fatal or serious accidents through the implementation of Vision Zero.

Climate & Infrastructure Investment

We support funding to meet the infrastructure needs of the state's zero emission vehicle goals as well as ensuring that the energy grid is prepared to meet this demand. As the market penetration of zero emission vehicles increases, fuel taxes will bring in less and less revenue, impacting transportation and infrastructure funding if not replaced. California must prepare for this impact and find a new funding mechanism for critical transportation and infrastructure projects. We support opportunities for walkable and bikeable communities to support climate goals and vibrant downtowns while easing transportation system burdens.

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LOCAL AND STATE POLICY PLATFORM 2025 TOURISM



Sonoma County’s allure as a global destination for high-end wines, craft beer, outdoor recreation, and cutting-edge cuisine is a critical component of the region’s ongoing economic success.

Large employers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs all rely on the strength of the local tourism economy, which generates over two billion spent annually by visitors to Sonoma County, and also provides amenities and recreation opportunities for locals. While Sonoma County has a diverse economy, tourism is foundational to it. Investment in the industry, the arts, and in special events must be encouraged to help the industry continue to recover as quickly as possible, and will play a critical role in our local, regional, and state level economic success.

We support the expansion and development of hotel rooms, in particular those providing extended stay and large conference amenities. Local employers depend on access to hotel rooms and insufficient large conference amenities locally mean that we aren’t able to compete adequately for large meetings, conferences, and events that would bring a positive economic impact to our region.

We support the expansion of full service and luxury properties, ensuring access to a target market that brings higher TOT and BIA funding. We support and invest in events, facilities, and other cultural resources that promote Santa Rosa and the region as a world class destination.

Transient Occupancy Taxes provide vital funding for tourism support, advertising and marketing Sonoma County and Santa Rosa as a desirable destination, and for making investments to improve the community in ways that enhance the desirability of our destination. Careful consideration needs to be given to increases in TOT that could drive customers away and on areas of investment that deliver high returns for the community.

As policies are considered regarding vacation rentals, we support the use of data to make policy decisions. As a vital segment of the tourism economy, any policies limiting or governing them must use data to separate issues from perception.

Homelessness, as noted in this platform as to the impact downtown, is negatively impacting tourism and visitor willingness to book room stays. The challenges that homelessness is creating for this industry that is foundational to our economy are yet another reason to address unlawful behavior, focus funding on interim shelter with services, and implement proven solutions to help the most vulnerable.

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