

# After the Disaster: Housing

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# Overview

## Background

### Overlapping phases of housing needs after a disaster

- Evacuation and repopulation
- Interim and temporary housing
- Rebuilding and recovery

## Looking forward

### Lessons learned and recommendations



# Sonoma Complex Fires, October 2017

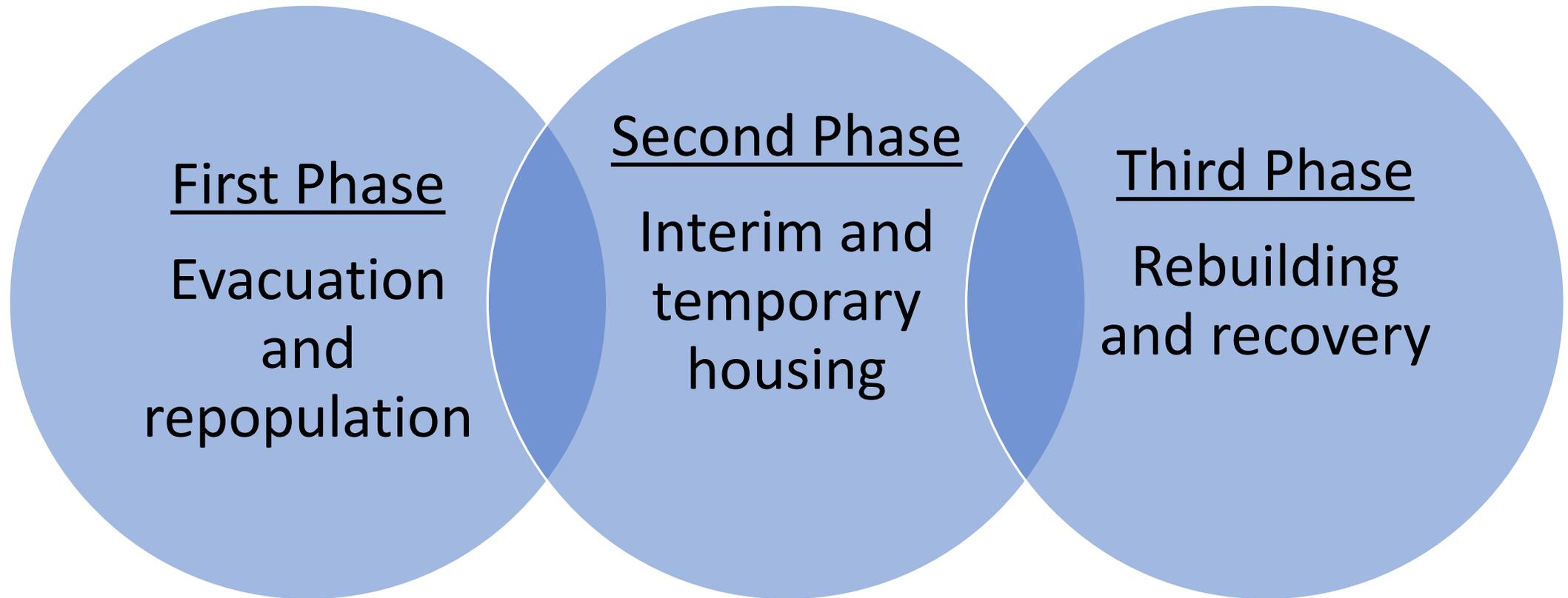
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- 5,300 homes destroyed countywide
- Santa Rosa lost 5% of its housing stock overnight
- More than 100,000 people evacuated, some for weeks
- 4,162 evacuees in 43 shelters
- Pre-existing housing crisis



# Three overlapping phases of housing needs after a disaster

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First phase  
Evacuation and repopulation

# Evacuation: immediate shelter needs

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- Number of evacuees reporting to shelters depends on demographics and scope of disaster. Many will find other options:
  - Hotels/motels, campgrounds, RV parks
  - Friends and family: guest bedrooms, backyard camping, RVs in driveways
  - Big box store parking lots
- Activate shelters in other jurisdictions if needed (mutual assistance)
- Disaster workers (mutual aid/mutual assistance) need a place to sleep, too

# Repopulation

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- Residents with habitable homes return
- Remaining displaced population with longer-term housing needs
  - Residents with destroyed or heavily damaged homes
  - Residents with homes that are uninhabitable for other reasons (threat of debris flows, lack of essential services)
- Displacement domino effect begins: disaster-displaced residents displace renters not directly affected by the disaster.

# Displacement domino effect

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Second Phase  
**Interim and temporary housing**

# Meeting temporary/interim housing needs

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Goal: Ensure that there is enough housing (permanent or temporary) that is available, affordable, and safe

- Displaced population
- Recovery workers
- Prevent further housing displacement

# Temporary and interim housing: constraints

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- Skyrocketing rental prices; insurance company bidding wars
- Price gouging: Penal Code § 396 (potential jail time, penalties)
- Option: local ordinance to address price gouging
  - Permitted by Penal Code § 396
  - Potentially lower bar to enforcement; greater reach
  - You may encounter resistance from your DA



# Temporary and interim housing: options

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- Adaptive re-use ordinance
- Vacation rentals: incentives to rent to displaced persons on longer-term basis
- “Safe parking” ordinance or program
- Accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units
- Temporary housing villages: RVs, tiny homes, trailers, modulars in existing RV parks, campgrounds, vacant parcels

# Temporary and interim housing: things to consider

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- What type of permit will be required for different temporary housing options
- Standards for permit issuance (sanitation, water, power)
- Discretion
- Term
- Enforcement

# Temporary housing on disaster properties

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Some disaster survivors want to return to their own property  
(in RVs, trailers) right away

When there's no housing available of any kind, it's an  
appealing option

# Temporary housing on disaster properties

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Require permits.

Do not issue permits until cleanup/debris removal is complete, testing is done, and the site has received all environmental clearances.



Third phase  
**Rebuilding and recovery**

# Transition to rebuilding and recovery

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## Policy questions

### The long view

- Should all destroyed homes be allowed to rebuild in the same location?
- Advance longer-term housing and land use goals through rebuilding and recovery process?

# Transition to rebuilding and recovery

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## Fees

- Waivers: Waived fees not eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Homeowners' insurance generally covers.
- Reductions: Potential to reduce rebuild permit fees because sites were previously developed (less staff time to process).
- Impact fees: "Substantially equivalent" reconstruction after disaster is exempt from development fees per Government Code § 66011 (Mitigation Fee Act).
- Incentives: Reduce or eliminate fees for development you want to incentivize. (Santa Rosa, Sonoma County: ADU permit fees.)



# Transition to rebuilding and recovery

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## Common issues

- Legal non-conforming uses and structures. Will your existing ordinance be appropriate for rebuilding after a major disaster?
  - Allow legal NCUs to expand?
  - What nonconformities don't matter after a major disaster?
- Design review. Keep current system, streamline, eliminate?
- Natural hazards. Rebuild on parcels with significant hazards? Waive normally applicable local requirements?
  - Fault zones, debris flow risk, very high fire hazard zones, floodplains
- HOAs

# Transition to rebuilding and recovery

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## Form and process

Urgency ordinances (supermajority vote; interim or permanent)

Options for post-disaster housing and land use ordinances:

- Adopt disaster recovery zoning overlay (Santa Rosa)
- Adopt separate disaster recovery chapter of municipal code (Sonoma County, Shasta County)

Tips for disaster ordinances:

- Include sunset provision (2-3 years after start of disaster)
- Build in administrative discretion

# Balancing rebuild permitting activity with resumption of normal business

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## Options:

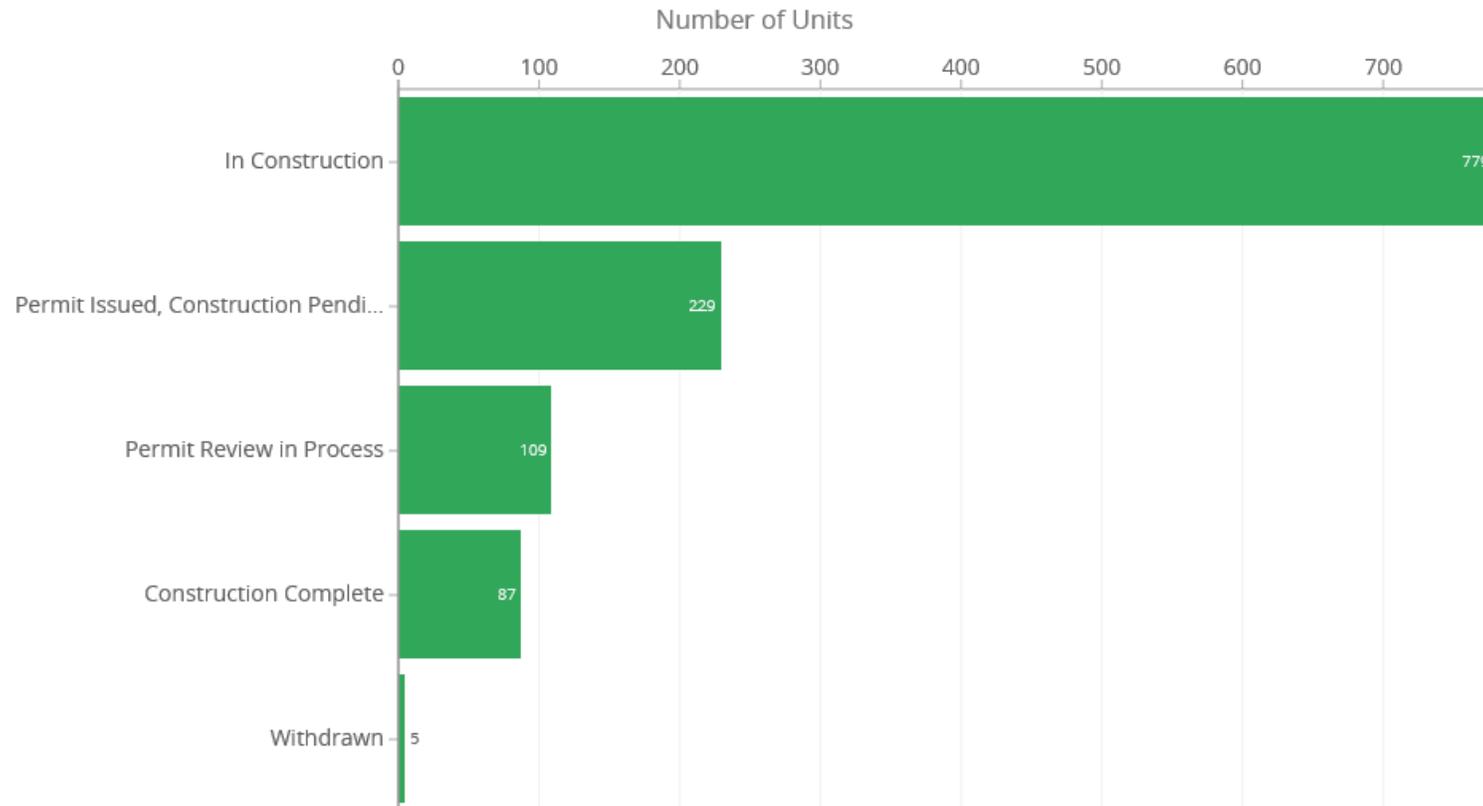
- Contract out rebuild permit processing
- Moratorium on building permits not related to rebuilding (Salinas), or simply prioritize work on rebuild permits
- Ordinance automatically extending expiration date of unused use permits, tentative maps, etc. (Sonoma County)



# Rebuilding takes time

Number of units by status for parcels impacted by the Sonoma Complex Fires in unincorporated Sonoma County (as of May 16, 2019)

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# Key date to plan for

## Three years from the date of disaster

- Most “Additional Living Expense” coverage expires (2019 and later disasters)
- Many survivors may still be rebuilding when their ALE expires
- Potential secondary housing crisis
- 2017 and 2018 disasters: most insureds have 2-year ALE coverage (for most Sonoma Complex Fire survivors, ALE expires on October 8 or 9, 2019.)

# Looking forward: innovation and institutional change

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## Ongoing experiments

- Sonoma County Office of Recovery and Resiliency
- Renewal Enterprise District

# Sonoma County Office of Recovery and Resiliency

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- New department established to coordinate recovery efforts among departments and develop a long-term strategic approach to recovery.
- Created the Recovery and Resiliency Framework, structured around five strategic areas: Community Preparedness & Infrastructure, Housing, Economy, Safety Net Services, Natural Resources.
- Report card: successful ongoing experiment



# Renewal Enterprise District

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- JPA created by Sonoma County and City of Santa Rosa
- Collaborative regional approach to increasing multi-family housing development in key infill areas
- Leverage public and private funding, attract additional funding and developer interest
- Report card: ongoing experiment/in progress



**Renewal Enterprise District (RED)**

County of Sonoma | City of Santa Rosa

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# Lessons Learned & Recommendations

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1. Adopt or develop a housing-focused disaster recovery ordinance before the disaster happens.
2. In your longer-term recovery work, DO experiment with creative approaches.
3. Help your clients create and maintain a rebuild permitting process that is predictable, transparent, reasonably fast, and humane.
4. Plan in advance for coordination among your departments. Who and how?
5. Use the city/county disaster network. There is a wealth of experience and ideas among us.
6. **Recovery is a marathon, not a sprint.**



Thank you

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