



Sustainable Sonoma Council Meeting Notes

December 9, 2020

Videoconference format

Plain text is agenda, *italics is discussion.*

Meeting focus: What Sustainable Sonoma has to say about the future of Eldridge.

Attendees: see end of notes.

1. Homes report and its launch. See <https://www.sustainablesonoma.net/homes> for full report and executive summary.

Homes for Sustainable Sonoma: Strategic Recommendations for Our Community is our coalition's gift to Sonoma Valley. It's a big deal we can all be proud of.

See slides summarizing *Homes* report [here](#). Spanish Executive Summary will be up by end of day tomorrow.

Now that we've produced this set of recommendations--expert-vetted, community-created, TBL--we all need to help get the message out, by talking about it in your newsletters, social media, providing quotes, etc.

[Digital media kit](#) includes shareable images of the report, housing declaration and summaries like those in this slide show, captions ranging from short and appropriate for social media to what could be a full article in your newsletter. Also a quotes parking lot--we expect ongoing press; it's great to have many voices raised.

-- *Suggestion that we hold off until January so that partners can plan communications.*

2. How can the future of Eldridge advance Sustainable Sonoma's vision and values? End point: consensus statement from entire Council about what SuSo wants or does not want there.

1. Revisit SuSo mission, vision, and triple-bottom line values. See more slides [here](#).
2. Realities of the Eldridge situation. See more slides [here](#). See also sdcspecificplan.com and transformsdc.com.
 - a. State makes final call and will sell most or all the land.
 - b. Site must eventually produce revenue so that state does not lose money, but how much and by when is not known. \$100M+ just to demo. Unknown millions to rebuild infrastructure, more to construct buildings. Warm shutdown costs \$7-10M/year.
 - c. State requires "affordable housing" as a "priority" (see California code section 14670.10.5 [here](#)).

- d. State has committed to protecting “approximately 700 acres” of open space, so constructed new uses would seem restricted to the ~200 acre campus. (see code section)
 - e. The formal engagement process is so far not representative (and SuSo isn’t either).
 - f. The site has highly engaged neighbors in Glen Ellen.
 - g. Actual construction might not happen for 8-10 years.
3. Timeline (see slides)

In the notes below, words in purple are possible pieces for consensus SuSo statement.

4. What future for Eldridge will most improve the environment, equity, and economy of Sonoma Valley?
 - a. Who are we doing this for? Who benefits, and in what timeframe? (0-5 years: not much.
 - o *Construction of new housing* (which won't be available until the post-2031 RHNA cycle) vs. *Adaptive REUSE of the existing buildings to create affordable housing ASAP.*
 - o *Should kids who live at Eldridge should be able to walk to school? (all say yes) A sustainable community needs an elementary school. Lots of thumbs up.*
 - o *Some in Glen Ellen talk about moving Dunbar to Eldridge. School could be a hub for community-building, equity exchange with school district. Better to keep it general, that school district provide school services on the location, not specify any particular school. Also, many kids are bussed from the Springs to Dunbar.*
 - o *What about specific language for housing for teachers?*
 - o *Don't want Eldridge to benefit those who already have good housing or can afford to have housing anywhere they choose, do not allow high-end housing. Several thumbs up.*
 - o *It should be integrated into, compatible with, the Glen Ellen community. Question: in terms of look and feel, or in terms of people? Answer: not the “who” but the physical structure.*
 - o *The word “urban” is alarming people. Maybe better to think about “urban” in terms of the historic, highly varied uses of the campus as a center that included industry. RHNA cycle as timing? Jane Riley has said SDC is off the table for current RHNA cycle because it won't be built by 2031.*
 - o *Work with SRJC to bring education around building trades and health care. Both fields that need more people locally, and that offer opportunities for people who are lower on the socio-economic ladder.*
 - o *We face a variety of crises related to sustainability. SuSo is positioned to do something unique, global center for climate innovation, i.e. Eldridge Enterprise.*
 - o *SuSo should include some statement about how the entire 700 acres plus should be transferred to parkland to benefit everyone and the economy.*
 - o *Bring in concept of a “complete community” (this has informed the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration). Balance “world class” institution without summoning corporations, “intruders”. How are these ideas going to be paid for?*
 - o *Lower cost housing is unlike most of what is currently in GE. Yes “complete community”. Something affordable and sustainable seems totally different than what GE is right now, which is wealthy, etc., not an example of a sustainable community.*
 - o *Don't like the idea of big business, do support the idea of an institute, except an institute wouldn't create many jobs.*

- b. What land uses or activities on the campus would accomplish this intent? Note that campus is large and all suggestions below could have a place. See some of the proposals already known, [here](#).
 - o *Locally produced food farmed sustainably. See CAFF proposal.*
 - o *The future will bring lots that we cannot anticipate now, impact of technology.*
 - o *Technocratic "invasion" is coming our way. What elements can preserve community? Museum?*
 - o *Basic services like health, office of health center.*
 - o *What is the relationship between what we are talking about here and the process that is already in place? Caitlin: confusion is widespread about the process, no one feels included or heard by existing process. Supervisors know that, want a better process.*
 - o *Is there consensus around reframing "Urban" as "Complete Community"? (Cynthia supports) Diana: We would need to be absolutely sure that the decision makers accept and uphold that definition of 'Urban.'" Didn't the term 'complete community' come from the State in the first place? No. Tracy: Both "urban" and "complete community" will get pushback from Glen Ellen. Both connote something that doesn't exist in context.*
- c. What operating rules (guardrails, governance, constraints, criteria) would be needed?
 - o *Consider a Trust that governs site, ideally made up of diverse interests like SuSo, like planning advisory team. Needs to be responsive to changes in future,, with broad guiding principles i.e. sustainability, not too constrictive, flexible, that will guide activities that are a hub or model for what we want to see in the larger community. Some thumbs up.*
 - o *A Trust would need rules (a charter)... Would these rules come out of the current Specific Plan process? No.*

3. Next steps

Despite our efforts so far, the SuSo Council and staff are a highly non-representative group, in many ways reproducing the problems of the community engagement process so far. No young people, very few people of color, no one who can't find a job that pays some rent. SuSo staff working actively on Native voices.

1. How about SuSo hosting a *true stakeholder assessment run by a professional, extending throughout entire community (far beyond SuSo) especially including young people, people of color, low-income people?*
 - a. *Lots of thumbs up*
 - b. *Current Public Advisory Team (Richard Dale is on it) is mostly people from Glen Ellen, environment, human services, some local developers. Could use diversity. No youth, latino, (native, POC.).*
 - c. *Just today learned the County may be interested in conducting this type of facilitation.*
 - d. *Use existing channels, e.g. Latinx people participating in Susan Gorin's weekly calls in Spanish. Contact Karina Garcia.*
 - e. *Consultants said in recent public workshop that any proposals would not be considered that do not come through their process!*
2. Consensus letter stating what SuSo wants and does not want in Eldridge future. Staff will summarize input today, circulate to entire Council for thumbs up/down/sideways, may involve word-smithing, when final will submit to planning process and newspapers. Yes.

Attendees: Council

Cathy Wade Shepard
Diana Sanson
David Morell
Lorraine Ashton
Teri Shore
Stephanie Hiller

Tom Conlon
Ann Colichidas
John Kelly
Orlando Rodriguez
Richard de Leon
Tracy Salcedo

Steering Committee
Kimberly Blattner
Richard Dale
Cynthia Scarborough

Comments submitted by Council not in attendance:

Fred Allebach
12/11/20

SVHG council member SDC comments

**2. The future of the former SDC campus in Eldridge.
What elements of the future Eldridge would most improve Sonoma Valley's triple bottom line; that is, its equity, environment, and economy?**

This is a super broad question!

Env:

Obviously, the natural aspects are existent and important to conserve, especially the water resources, drainage, groundwater recharge, and fostering biodiversity in general. This is an important natural area to conserve key features.

Econ:

At this point, designing a sustainable economy seems to be impossible bc of the hegemony of capitalist assumptions and actors who can't and won't see outside that box. There appear to be no serious local economists or actors who can give viable, immediate workable alternatives to the unsustainable status quo, even as **the current economy continues to be the core driver of unsustainability.**

My cohort wants to see systemic structural change in the economy. If SDC is a clean planning slate, systemic change is what we want. See below for "next steps."

(Personal opinion: Given the current predatory capitalist stasis, considering a future Eldridge sustainable economy is about like asking Santa what you want for X Mas. For me, step one: get three Democratic socialist votes on the BOS and the city council, elect a county Treasurer who supports public banking and who will divest from vampire squid banks, appoint can-do socialists; then we might have the political will to take needed economic steps for TBL sustainability. As it is now, status quo actors in charge don't have the vision or the daring to make needed economic changes. TBL and economy has a long ways to go. We are now stuck in a noblesse oblige stage where benefits trickle down from actors who have hoarded resources. Noblesse oblige is good, better than none at all, but it is a band aid for needed economic structural changes.

What we need as a society is to consume way less to reduce GHG and enviro impacts but at the same time, create an econ system that will allow for housing, education, health, food, etc

etc. We need a new way to deal with money, value, and basic needs. Given the current political landscape, it is more likely we will collapse before any serious consensus planning ahead for needed sustainable change can be done.)

Having said all that, a Green New Deal, CCC-type organic farm operation that would sell produce at affordable rates (or free) could be a winner. A socialist public service farm to drive down prices and feed people well. A CCC-type forest management/ fire mitigation service would be good too. Focus this TBL SDC socialist/ sustainable synergy on youth and the homeless.

Equity/ housing:

My cohort (sector) would like to see housing and more *affordable* housing now, not in ten years. Use the multi-unit residences — now — for affordable housing. Given that everyone can see buildings and a town municipal services system that until recently were functional, it is easy to imagine that the buildings can be repurposed for housing now, with heat pumps, maybe with simple under-sink [canister water filtration](#). This water could be brought into buildings with above-ground, drinking water quality black water supply hose. A series of large black plastic tanks could be set up; store shallow aquifer water from a new shallow well. If you let can-do people do it, it would all get done, and cheaply . I could paint the units.

The question of reviving the whole water system appears prohibitive and is embroiled in multi-layered politics and pragmatics. That the water system *is shut down* until seriously expensive repairs are done appears to be a train that has already left the station. The high costs involved would seem to indicate that only entities with a lot of money, i.e. speculative developers, can muster the resources, and such speculation is frequently concerned with profit over public good. Not a good sign for TBL aspirations. Who is going to pay to rehab the whole water system and who will then expect benefits?

The independent integrity of Eldridge from Gen Ellen should be emphasized when it comes to SDC self-determination. Obviously, Glen Ellen will exert NIMBY pressures and sure they have a say, but SDC is for the whole valley, not just Glen Ellen. Eldridge is “Eldridge” on most maps and is recognized as a census designated place. It was built as worker housing for the SDC and includes a large population of Latinos and other working-class folks.

(Personal opinion: There could be synergy with having Eldridge be a bedroom community for the valley workforce, with daily shuttles but frankly, the area is off the beaten track and intensifying use here amounts to a kind of “sprawl” that will likely increase VMT and GHG impacts. Ironically, more central possible affordable housing was intensely resisted (UGB) even on just a six-acre lot near the core of town. To me this all just doesn’t make sense. What is “smart growth” about SDC? The county has a serious affordable housing problem but SDC can’t be used in the short term. And central infill can’t be done on affordable land bc of smart growth theory purity.)

At the end of the day, aspirations for TBL futures seem stymied at about every turn. SDC is in play bc the state shut it down, now we all have to deal with it. It’s an opportunity for a new day. TBL sustainability is a great and worthy aspiration, how to apply it to the SDC campus? Save the environment, radically alter and abandon capitalist economic assumptions and assumptions of how we use money, then use SDC as a land management/ food ag production area, where homeless and youth can live and work on site. Get really innovative in the short run and use the campus for affordable housing now.

3. Next steps

Consider a SuSo statement advocating for solutions at Eldridge that are supported across sectors (assuming we identify some of these). Consider SuSo hosting a thorough stakeholder assessment to inform Eldridge planning.

Just like SuSo can't support rent control and an eviction moratorium bc landlords are at the table, SuSo should not be supporting anything with capitalist economic assumptions that end up exploiting renters and workers. What this points to is **the need to have TBL sustainability be seen as transformative, not just silos that come together to find whatever common denominators they have**. If sustainability is going to work, when actors, sectors, interests, cohorts get to the middle of the Venn diagram, **they need to be prepared to be transformed to a new vision and paradigm, have that goal**, not just the same old silos jockeying for power and control through the TBL frame. People have to be willing to be vulnerable, possibly lose current silo control, and transform, but as long as negotiations are like a prisoner's dilemma, no one will want to give if they feel others will take advantage.

If we have any "laws" of human nature, those with power and control don't willingly give it up. This means that SuSo (and Sonoma Valley) has internal tensions and contradictions that need to get on the table and be addressed. If not, we won't be taking needed transformative steps, we'll just recap existing silo (class) tensions.