



11/28/21

To: Permit Sonoma
cc: Board of Supervisors
Dyett & Bhatia
Area Media

The Sonoma Valley Housing Group respectfully submits the following ideas for consideration concerning the redevelopment of the Sonoma Development Center.

Summary

We support:

- INTERIM USE — of existing facilities for low-income housing.
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING — at the max, held in perpetuity, including an RV park.
- COMMUNITY FACILITIES — a plaza, community hall, park, sports fields.
- A SCHOOL — a performing arts theater, offices, an innovation center.
- PROTECTED OPEN SPACE — an adequate wildlife corridor.
- ADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION — to Santa Rosa and Sonoma.
- A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST — for financing and administration.
- A FOCUS ON SOCIAL EQUITY — especially for Latinx and other workers.
- NO TOURISM HOTEL OR RESORT — use public land for the public.

Interim Housing

We support The [SDC Campus Project's](#) proposal for interim use of existing group housing for low-income residents. Given the strong likelihood of a 5-year-or-more, drawn-out CEQA process with appeals and lawsuits, interim re-use makes great sense. Please take a fresh look and seriously consider the SDC Campus Project proposal.

Permanent housing

We support a high number of lower cost, lower AMI units to cover vulnerable, disadvantaged populations such as Latinx, seniors, disabled, and working-class people generally. Rather than the proposed 75% market-rate, 25% affordable mix, we propose a 75% affordable, 25% market-rate mix.

The SDC exists in an urban service area (USA). Dense Valley infill development is appropriate. If the number of inclusionary units becomes dependent on the overall number of units, we

support higher numbers in order to get the maximum inclusion for the low-income cohort we represent.

All affordable units must be affordable in perpetuity.

The Sonoma Valley Housing Group is allied (and shares members) with the Valley-based Latinx grassroots group Food For All/Comida Para Todos. We request that decision makers account for the needs of this SDC neighbor especially — the Sonoma Valley Latinx cohort — as well as for all low-income residents of whatever race or ethnicity.

We call for innovative design alternatives that cost less to build — such as, for example, modular units, 3D-printed structures, or variable-sized, fire-resistant [Quonset hut kits](#), as featured in the New York Times.

We support including an RV park with permanent, monthly-rate, affordable spaces, to provide stable housing opportunities, including not more than 30% higher priced temporary tourist spaces with a two-week annual limit.

Community

We call for public space at the SDC: a community building, a plaza, a park with grills and picnic tables, sports amenities: soccer, softball, volleyball. We support other community-service land uses such as education, performing arts, an office building, an innovation-center. A large housing effort will require schools. Space and funding for public education must be part of the plan. There is no room for yet another resort or hotel in the community we envision.

Environment

We support an expansive wildlife corridor with a wider pinch point than currently exists, with 100-foot stream setbacks and no night lighting directed towards the corridor. Let's keep as much area for animals to pass through as possible. Insofar as the whole campus is fair game for night-time animal movements, housing and other buildings should be clustered, multi-story, and sound proof, with no fences allowed.

Transportation

The plan must provide frequently scheduled public transportation to connect this development with Santa Rosa and Sonoma.

Financing

We support a [Community Land Trust](#) (CLT) funding model to finance and control all land uses on the property. (The [Housing Land Trust](#) of Sonoma County might be an option for this function.) Any housing CLT at SDC needs to balance social equity and environmental interests equally.

The State should consider gifting the SDC to a CLT that represents the interests of all stakeholders. There could be one CLT for the core campus and another — a green land trust — for the open space.

If redeveloping the SDC represents a generational opportunity to show our collective best in design and planning, then a financing plan needs to rise to that challenge and not simply recap maladaptive, socially inequitable business-as-usual solutions. Public/private financing should be given a serious look. A public bank, such as being considered by a number of California cities, could underwrite development.

The State has made low-income housing a priority on the site (and throughout California), and it has run budget surpluses in excess of \$30 billion for two years running. Surely, some of that money can underwrite affordable housing on public property that has served the underprivileged for more than a century.

The State must assume responsibility for removing toxic waste and repairing the water and sewage systems, which it has left to deteriorate.

Process

The planning timeline has become much too short. Let's slow things down and get back the lost three or four months that were initially promised. Among other things, it appears that to date only a narrow bandwidth of economic-feasibility ideas have been considered. The public needs time to propose and demonstrate economically viable alternatives.

[signed]

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