



November 22, 2021

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors,

We are a coalition of about 30 organizations in Sonoma Valley. We tackle challenges and take positions that 1. advance a healthy local economy, 2. steward our environment, and 3. increase equity for our community members. We are paying a lot of attention to the future of Sonoma Developmental Center, because it provides an enormous opportunity in all three of these areas.

When you discussed SDC early this year, you all said you wanted to see a “transformational”, “visionary” outcome with a “generational” impact. We do, too.

You have no doubt heard about the Sonoma Valley public’s nearly universal, passionate rejection of the three land use alternatives.

We ask you to direct Permit Sonoma and their consultants to re-construct the economic feasibility analysis underlying the SDC Specific Plan to include multiple public and philanthropic funding sources that can deliver greater public benefit over the first 20 years of SDC redevelopment.

The land use alternatives for SDC so far do not provide much public benefit from this public land, because the proposals are constrained by a narrow economic analysis. The economic analysis so far ignores any future revenues from public or philanthropic sources. The only funds enumerated so far are from private free-market developers of residential or hotel projects. By contrast, the public benefits that the community wants—deeper levels of affordability, community services like a health clinic or nonprofit space, recreation, next-generation water and energy systems, educational and training programs, etc—will require public and philanthropic money.

Sonoma County’s agencies and nonprofits are extraordinarily successful at producing public benefits from public and philanthropic funding sources. Over the long time period that SDC will be redeveloped, these types of funds are as sure to materialize as private developer monies are.

Example public and philanthropic sources:

- State and federal funds and tax credits regularly tapped by nonprofit housing developers. Note that 100% affordable housing projects leverage local investment with state and federal funding at an average ratio of 7:1
- California’s Community Economic Resilience Fund program
- Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds for remediation and affordable housing. The State Budget section “Scaling up development on state excess sites” (p. 94) allocates “\$45 million one-time Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to scale up excess land development with funding for site remediation and local government matching grants.”
- Project Homekey and other state funds to reduce housing insecurity, build homes and provide social services
- Governor Newsom’s Sept 23, 2021 legislative package of \$15 billion for climate action, for example to support an island-able microgrid at SDC, and other energy-related funders well known to Sonoma Clean Power
- workforce development grant programs
- Department of Water Resources sustainable groundwater and stormwater capture, and other water funders well known to Sonoma Water
- Build Back Better funds
- American Rescue Plan Act
- FEMA and similar funds to build disaster-ready communities
- Moore Foundation, Todd Trust, and other foundations who have already funded the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, for a trail system and campus design that protects wildlife connectivity
- Private philanthropy in Sonoma County, of the kind that built the Green Music Center and La Luz’s new buildings

Another way to improve SDC’s economics is to reduce the number of older buildings rehabbed. Our Collaborative’s members do not seek historic preservation of more than one or two buildings.

Thank you for aiming high at SDC,

The Sonoma Valley Collaborative Steering Committee

Kimberly Blattner

La Luz Center, Board
Member

Richard Dale

Sonoma Ecology
Center, Executive
Director; Chamber of
Commerce, Board
Member

Cynthia

Scarborough
Sonoma County Area
Agency on Aging
Advisory Council,
Secretary; Vintage
House Executive
Director (retired)

Tim Zahner

Sonoma Valley Visitors
Bureau, Executive
Director

