

September 20, 2023

To: Senator Mike McGuire

Senator Bill Dodd

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry

Assemblymember Damon Connolly



Fr: Concerned Community Leaders and Constituents

Re: Sonoma Developmental Center Development Plans – Call for Public Meeting and Change of Course

Via Hard Copy and Email:

senator.mcguire@senate.ca.gov, senator.dodd@senate.ca.gov,

assemblymember.connolly@assembly.ca.gov, assemblymember.aguiar-curry@assembly.ca.gov

Dear Senators and Assemblymembers,

We, the undersigned community leaders and constituents, are writing to express our strong concerns and objections to the large-scale development recently proposed by the State of California and its chosen developer for the historic campus at the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC).

Not only did this action reject years of public input to scale back development at SDC and voters' longstanding desires to put new homes and other development into existing cities and towns, SDC developer's plan was unexpectedly submitted under housing streamlining provisions of SB 330 and state law known as the "Builder's Remedy." This maneuver is clearly intended to shortcut county planning and public review despite promises from our state representatives that the future of SDC will be driven by the community.

The project plan submitted by Grupe+Rogal partnership, aka Eldridge Renewal, with sign-off by the state as the property owner calls for 930 residential units, a large hotel and 410,000 square feet of commercial space including a convention/event center.

While we very much support and appreciate the State Legislature's actions to transfer the 750-acres of open space to state and regional parks, allowing a massive development in the heart of the wildlife corridor and open space with inadequate environmental protections puts those lands at high risk of degradation of habitat, water, air and wildlife, not to mention increasing climate-changing emissions.

The development is situated in a known wildfire danger zone with limited options for evacuation, as we saw in the 2017, 2019 and 2020 wildfires in Sonoma County. Egregiously, the Rogal proposal, as well as the county's SDC Specific Plan, ignores the realities of inadequate roads and already congested traffic, putting lives at risk in the event of emergency evacuations during wildfires or other catastrophes.

In addition, the developer's plan features 87 percent UNAFFORDABLE housing, with residences up to 3,900 square feet, much larger than the 1800 sq ft. living units described in the County of Sonoma's unpopular Specific Plan.

We believe that the filing by the California Department of General Services (DGS) as the owner of the property also ignores DGS' responsibilities under the enabling legislation calling for the disposition of the SDC property. DGS's action is a bad faith abdication of the legislative directive to give priority, via a community process, in the disposition of that property to affordable housing and the preservation of the natural resources and wildlife in and around SDC.

As you know, there is room for new development in the City of Sonoma, the Springs and other cities and towns in Sonoma county without sprawling into the countryside, which is in major conflict with longstanding state, regional and county policies for city-centered growth, reducing driving, and preserving open space under the 30 X 30 and other initiatives.

Call for Meetings with State Representatives, DGS, and California Department of Housing & Community Development as follows:

1. Hold a Public Hearing or Town Hall meeting in Sonoma Valley as soon as possible to clarify the many questions we have about the SDC developer's plan and the provisions of SB 330 and the Builder's Remedy.
2. Meet with us in person as soon as possible to clarify the many questions we have about SDC developer's plan and the provisions of SB 330 and the Builder's Remedy.

Change Course at SDC:

3. Work with us to introduce legislation that would revise existing state law to complete transfer of open space lands with boundaries and scale back housing and development in line with community input.
4. Work with us to introduce legislation directing Department of Natural Resources to conduct a feasibility study for transferring the 180-acre historic campus to state and regional parks or another public entity that will preserve open space and history and reuse old buildings for housing and non-profits based on Marin Headlands model.
5. Work with us to introduce legislation directing the CA Air Resources Board or appropriate state entity to conduct an independent study on the climate emissions impacts from proposed development at SDC; and comparing it to other climate friendly uses such as conservation and the Marin Headlands model.

Please respond at your earliest convenience and prioritize public in-person meetings.

Sincerely yours,



Teri Shore, Valley Action Team
Boyes Hot Springs

Robert Baeyen, Sonoma

Meg Beeler, Sonoma

Josette Brose-Eichar, Boyes Hot Springs

Sharon Church and Vicki Baseheart,
Glen Ellen

Thomas P. Conlon, Sonoma

David Eichar, Boyes Hot Springs

Marylee Guinon
Director, State Alliance for Firesafe Road
Regulations
Sebastopol

Beth Hadley, Sonoma

Linda Hale, Glen Ellen

Alice and Sanford Horowitz, Glen Ellen

Maya Khosla, Senior Biologist
Rohnert Park

Nancy Kirwan, Sonoma

Sean Elizabeth Lember, Boyes Hot Springs

Michael Lockert, Sonoma

Mary Martinez
Adrian Martinez
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Gregg Montgomery, Sonoma

Ken and Karen Niehoff, Boyes Hot Springs

Johanna Patri, Sonoma

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Paul Rockett
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Member, Friends of North Sonoma

Padi Selwyn
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Preserve Rural Sonoma County
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Will Shonbrun, Boyes Hot Springs

Dee Swanhuysen, Chair, West County Alliance,
Sebastopol

Carl Tennenbaum, Sebastopol

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