



January 22, 2021

Delivered via email to:

Sonoma County Supervisors  
Permit Sonoma Planning Director, Deputy Director, Project Planner, Planning  
Agency commissioners, and Dyett & Bhatia plan consultants  
City of Sonoma Council, Planning Director, and Planning Commission  
Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission  
Members of the SDC Specific Plan Public Advisory Team

Dear decision-makers and planners for the SDC Specific Plan,

Sustainable Sonoma is a coalition of community leaders from a wide range of sectors across Sonoma Valley, finding solutions and taking action to address our community's biggest challenges.

This letter expresses the consensus of the Sustainable Sonoma Council regarding the future of Eldridge/SDC, located among the existing neighborhoods of Glen Ellen both north and south of SDC. These statements are based on Sustainable Sonoma's values of advancing the triple bottom line—economy, equity, and environment—of Sonoma Valley.

Sustainable Sonoma's current focus of work is housing affordability.

### **Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration**

Sonoma Valley suffers from a severe housing affordability crisis that affects every aspect of our community. The future of our community is at stake. Sustainable Sonoma is bringing the Sonoma Valley community's different sectors together to increase, improve, and preserve housing that is affordable for people who live or work in the Valley, within already developed areas, to create diverse, safe, complete neighborhoods.

Our new report, *Homes for A Sustainable Sonoma Valley: Strategic Recommendations for our Community*, had this statement about Eldridge:

The largest opportunity for new housing in Sonoma Valley is unquestionably the former campus of Sonoma Developmental Center. The future of this 200-acre site, nestled among hundreds of acres of accessible open space, already served by utilities and transit, with reliable water sources, is a once-in-a-generation

opportunity to create the types of neighborhoods envisioned in Sustainable Sonoma's Housing Declaration.

We have consensus support for a future Eldridge that includes the elements listed below. Bolded items have even stronger cross-sector support than non-bolded items.

## **Homes at Eldridge**

- 1. Homes/housing that are accessible to people who cannot afford Sonoma Valley market prices, whether to rent or to own.**
- 2. A diversity of home prices and styles—single-family, cottage or missing-middle, multifamily—focused on ordinary-size homes for households who will live there full time.**
3. If at all possible, reserve some housing for school teachers, emergency responders, nurses, or other critical community support workers.

## **Community at Eldridge**

- 1. Housing that is built at SDC should come along with community services that enhance quality of life, mix different kinds of people together, and help reduce commuting and driving, such as childcare, eldercare, transit, grocery, fitness facility, playfields, a health clinic, coffee shop, elementary school, and open space.**
- 2. The 700 acres of open space are protected permanently, along with the wildlife and biodiversity resources, water, and wildlife passage across Sonoma Valley.**
3. Set aside land for sustainably produced food.
4. Next-generation public transit and other options to reduce driving and commuting.
5. The site produces all its own water and energy, and even gives some back to the aquifer and the grid.

## **Jobs, Training, Businesses, Employment**

1. Land use designations that are compatible with development, over time, of places of employment that benefit the local and regional economy by diversifying beyond wine, hospitality, and food. These could include non-exportable, in-demand jobs of the future such as health care, renewable energy, climate response, wildland management, and the building trades.
2. Land use designations that are compatible with development, over time, of educational, vocational, and training facilities.

## **Process and Governance**

- 1. Beyond the land use designations made in the current process, the site will need an authority or governing structure or entity, made up of people from multiple sectors and communities, that sustains its values over time, even as conditions change.**

2. Interim use and adaptive re-use of campus buildings might help with the extreme housing crisis facing Sonoma Valley. We ask Sonoma County to produce a finding during the current planning process about whether, and under what conditions, it is financially and legally feasible to re-use certain buildings before or after property disposition. The City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety has a rapid assessment for re-use that might be appropriate.
3. Community engagement needs to be expanded before land use alternatives are selected. In particular, Latino, low-income, youth, Black, and Indigenous communities have not been sufficiently engaged, considering that Eldridge has the capacity to make substantial, positive, multi-generational contributions to Sonoma Valley and the North Bay.

These are the elements of the future Eldridge that have the strongest support across multiple sectors of Sonoma Valley. We ask you to include these elements in all the land use alternatives selected for evaluation at the former SDC campus.



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