

# THE GLEN ELLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.glenellenhistoricalsociety.org  
PO Box 35, GLEN ELLEN CA 95442

November 27, 2021

To: Brian Oh, Planning Manager  
Sonoma County PRMD  
Santa Rosa, CA  
engage@sdcspecificplan

RE: Comments on SDC Alternative Report

Dear Brian and Planning Team,

The Glen Ellen Historical Society (GEHS) joins with community stakeholders, Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma Mountain Preservation, Jack London Park Partners and others in heartfelt and dire concern of the three Alternative Plans regarding the Eldridge Property, formerly known as Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). These three plans have failed to live up to stakeholders invested commitment and thoughtful participation in community input opportunities. The Glen Ellen Historical Society stands with the greater community of Sonoma Valley in recommending and supporting a fourth Alternative Plan based on the performance standards put forth in the Sonoma Land Trust's response letter of 11/18/21 to the SVCAC, NSVMAC and Springs MAC.

One of our organization's primary concerns is the preservation of the history and legacy of over 125 years of care and service to the most vulnerable citizens of the State of California. Over one year ago the GEHS applied for Landmark status of the SDC property and no formal response has been made regarding this. In addition, we have submitted a proposal to Supervisor Gorin, Senators Dodd and McGuire for an historic area museum and visitor center within the larger property.

Nearing completion is the application for federal designation of the property for the National Registry of Historic sites.

It has been suggested that the GEHS be patient and wait for the Alternative Plans to see how our plan would be reflected in those documents. The unveiling of the three alternatives proved unsatisfactory.

Glen Ellen Historical Society is poised to establish:

\*A museum with hundreds of preserved artifacts now in storage.

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\*A vast library of books, journals and films, purchased from SDC to create an archival research center.

\*An event center for the community that will generate revenue.

\*The gateway to Sonoma Mountain which includes Open Space, and the Historic Jack London State Park via Eldridge.

\*Act as guardians of the historic cemetery located within the grounds of the historic area.

Currently the State of California is fiscally sound and has a solid budget so they can certainly afford to be creative. Their past offerings for over 30 years of a \$1.00 per year lease to organizations like the Sonoma Ecology Center could be applied to other non-profits in the area with a 10-year limit for fiscal solvency and development.

Glen Ellen Historical Society has consulted with scientists and experts in the field on the issue of climate change, retrofitting buildings and carbon emissions. Because of these findings we support the re-use of existing buildings to lower the valley's carbon footprint reducing its impact on climate change. The tear down and disposal of hazardous materials and releasing of embodied carbon into the atmosphere will have a dangerous impact on our community and the environment at large. Building re-use is a supported concept to help mitigate climate change which is crucial to the future of our valley.

It is vital to understand that once the property is altered there can be no return. Ecological, historical and environmental impacts are at stake. We would also ask the county to allow more time for a community driven process to help create a new alternative based on performance standards from the Sonoma Land Trust.

Also please consider the 750 acres of open space to remain as a conservation easement and to include the 150-year water rights and riparian stream setbacks to remain in place and in the public domain permanently.

The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor is another great concern. We certainly support affordable housing and job security. But we do not support the idea that housing, jobs, equity and economic growth are set against preserving history, the urgency of climate change and the health of the natural world. That our own human needs are so pressing that we can ignore and override environmental values and the looming climate crisis facing us.

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These three alternatives propose to create close to and in some cases over 1000 homes on the property. These numbers clearly do not enhance or protect natural resources although you state it does so in your plan.

The high density of homes brings with it a number of problems that severely affect the health of the wildlife corridor and surrounding community, including but not limited to, increased traffic, reduced air and water quality, artificial lighting, removal of native plants, placement of invasive species through home and business landscaping, pesticides, runoff and debris from construction, and the arrival of pets and domestic animals.

Our wildlife corridor is not just about habitat connectivity it is the heart of our valley, it is our legacy for clean air and clean water. We need them for our survival. We have already stressed our ecological systems beyond repair and if we compromise these last few wild places in Sonoma Valley, we will tip the scales toward a much bigger ecosystem collapse. We urge you to carefully consider the impact of close to 4000+ people along with their cars, traffic and pets on this precious wildlife corridor along with carbon emissions, climate change and the future of Sonoma Valley.

This is an opportunity for the county and state to step forward and support the voice of the community to preserve history and help create a sustainable and climate resilient future.

We have been so fortunate to live in this beautiful and awe-inspiring valley. Our children, yours and all future generations deserve the same.

Warmest regards,

Angela Nardo-Morgan  
Board President  
Glen Ellen Historical Society

cc: Susan Gorin, Sonoma County Supervisor  
Tennis Wick, Director, Sonoma County PRMD  
Senator Mark McGuire  
Senator Bill Dodd  
Assemblyperson Cecelia Aguilar-Curry  
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
Rajeev Bhatia  
Tania Carlone