

CANDIDATE INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

ELDRIDGE FOR ALL AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS' NEWSLETTERS AND WEBSITES

As we enter a critical election cycle, organizations active in the effort to find a balanced approach to the Sonoma Developmental Center's (SDC) redevelopment reached out to candidates running for office in the California Legislature 12th Assembly District and Board of Supervisors Districts 2 (Petaluma area) and 4 (Healdsburg area). The 12th Assembly district includes parts of Marin County and Sonoma Valley (including the SDC property).

No incumbents are competing in any of these races. The newly elected office holder will play an important role in shaping the SDC's future. While the Supervisor Districts up for election do not specifically represent Sonoma Valley (that responsibility is held by Supervisor Rebecca Hermosillo), the winners of the race will likely vote on approval of the development plan.

In a joint letter (and follow-up communications), Sonoma Community Advocates for a Liveable Environment (SCALE), the Valley of the Moon Alliance (VOTMA), the Glen Ellen Historical Society, Sonoma Valley Next 100 Years, and Sonoma Mountain Preservation reached out to all candidates in these races to solicit their views regarding SDC development plans. The conversations summarized below reflect the perspectives of the candidates most engaged on the issue who were generous in making time for the interviews. The other candidates did not respond to our request.

Supervisor District 4

Melanie Bagby

Melanie Bagby served two terms on the Cloverdale City Council and as Mayor during the 2019 fire/floods. She is very familiar with land use issues as a long-time member of the Cloverdale Planning Commission. She drove out from Cloverdale to meet at the SDC grounds on a Friday at about 5 p.m. She listened sympathetically to our concerns about SDC but she didn't want to express an opinion that could cause her to have to recuse herself from voting, if elected. She is endorsed by Sonoma County Conservation Action. More information about her candidacy can be found at melaniebagby.com.

Candidates who did not respond: Todd Lands, Tom Schwedhelm

Supervisor District 2

Candidates who did not respond: John King, Sylvia Lemus, Shelina Moreda & Joanna Paun

California 12th Assembly District

Eli Beckman

Eli Beckman was the two-term mayor of Corte Madera and is the founder and CEO of HAUS+, a company that builds sustainable small homes. He stated that he is an avowed affordable housing advocate. However, he observed that the proposed project does not represent sound land use policies of: city-centered growth, transit-oriented development, and low-density building in a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) zone. As such, he said that it did not "check any of the boxes" as a location for the type of development proposed. He was familiar with the community's proposal for housing development akin to the environmentally preferred alternative in the original EIR, and thought that advocates were being unfairly maligned as NIMBY. He pledged that, if elected, he would be an active participant in helping to preserve community benefit for this public asset. His website is: <https://www.elibeckman.com>.

Jackie Elward

Jackie Elward is a Rohnert Park Councilwoman and labor organizer who has focused on housing and affordability and brings a unique perspective as an immigrant from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She seemed well versed in the SDC controversy and was familiar with the challenges Sonoma Valley residents face with evacuation capability in the event of another wildfire, having known people in Kenwood who lost their homes to fire in 2017. She read the KLD fire evacuation study of the Valley on VOTMA's website, and understood the problems the study identified. She noted that high density housing proposals in rural areas that lack sufficient infrastructure to support such density are a problem. She expressed strong interest in focusing on affordable housing in logical areas of the County, rather than building 1,000 homes and commercial space on the SDC site in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), which would add to public safety concerns in the Valley.

She also stated she understood Valley residents' frustration with the lack of transparency and community consultation of the current SDC planning process including the inadequate initial Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that forced citizens to go to court and the politically well-connected developer and the State collaborating to submit a last-minute "builder's remedy" application, which limits the supervisors' discretion to reduce the size of the project).

Elward stated she does not accept corporate campaign contributions and strongly supports transparent government decision-making. She stated she would be a strong advocate for the residents of Glen Ellen, Kenwood and Oakmont as they try to deal with these issues and risks. Her website is: <https://www.jackie4assembly.com/about>.

Eric Lucan

Eric Lucan served three terms (11 years) as a Novato City Council Member before being elected to the Marin County Board of Supervisors in 2022. Until his election as Supervisor he was the Chief Marketing Officer for Mike's Bikes. Lucan is a champion for affordable housing who demonstrated a nuanced view of the challenges of building appropriate affordable housing, especially on the SDC site. While he lives in Marin, he has family in Oakmont, where he met us for an interview after spending a day going door to door. He related that SDC was one of the top issues he heard from people in his Oakmont canvassing.

Due to his Oakmont connections, he stated that he was well aware of the wildfire evacuation issues facing Valley residents and the negative impact that the proposed SDC project would have on residents' ability to escape a large-scale wildfire. He said that the current proposal was not moving in the right direction for the site. He also stated that he was solution-oriented and, if elected, would be an advocate for finding an appropriate resolution. His website is: www.ericlucan.com.