

November 25, 2020

TO: Susan Gorin, Sonoma County 1st District Supervisor
Scott Orr and Brian Oh, Permit Sonoma
Rajeev Bhatia, Dyett & Bhatia
Emmanuel Ursu, M Group

FROM: SDC/Eldridge Committee of the Glen Ellen Forum

RE: SDC Specific Plan

Formed in the fall of 2016, the Glen Ellen Forum SDC/Eldridge Committee is focused on keeping the Glen Ellen community up to date on all matters SDC. It our responsibility to: 1) solicit community input regarding development of the SDC Specific Plan; and 2) share that input with other interested parties, especially with those who will craft the final Specific Plan. While we do not claim to speak for the entire community, as residents of Glen Ellen and/or as individuals with deep and long-lasting ties to the SDC property, we do possess a great deal of insight into some of the most pressing redevelopment concerns on our community's collective mind.

We have heard on several occasions, including during the Nov. 14, 2020, virtual Community Workshop hosted by Dyett and Bhatia and Sonoma County, that Glen Ellen's primary concern with redevelopment of the SDC is traffic. While increased traffic is definitely a main concern, it is not the only one. Hoping to provide a comprehensive summation of key issues, as expressed during previous community workshops and visioning exercises, we respectfully submit the following:

1. Fundamental to our understanding of the SDC's transition process are promises made in the SDC Trailer Bill (Section 14670.10.5 of the Government Code relating to state property) that the approximately 700 acres of "lands outside the core developed campus and its related infrastructure be preserved as public parkland and open space." Until a land protection proposal is officially accepted and implemented, we request full transparency regarding negotiations on open space boundaries and arrangements for resource management.
2. The public has repeatedly been promised transparency and participation in a "robust community-driven process." While many of the guiding principles presented in the Nov. 14 workshop are consistent with the 2019 vision and principles developed by the community and vetted through a series of public workshops, critical differences seem to ignore the setting and proximity of the SDC campus to the existing Glen Ellen community. For example, the fact that a) the concept of **compatibility** with the surrounding community is not included in the new draft vision statement and guiding principles, and b) an emphasis has been placed on high density housing and urban uses (as mentioned and illustrated in the

vision statement), leaves many of us wondering if our opinions are truly being taken into account.¹

3. While redevelopment of the SDC must pencil out, we question whether the Specific Plan should prioritize the profit motives of a master developer over the needs and desires of the local community, which has to live through disruptions of redevelopment, the final outcome, and the aggregate impacts such a huge project entails. Compromises should be made that benefit the community as well as a potential developer.
4. We support a moderate level of housing, with preference for affordable, senior, veteran, and for individuals with disabilities, at a scale compatible with and beneficial to the surrounding community and that will not result in overburdening the single existing traffic corridor through Glen Ellen. New buildings should respect village architecture and historic buildings onsite, as opposed to urban-style housing. The SDC property is not located in an urban growth area; redevelopment should adhere to Sonoma County's General Plan and Glen Ellen's Development/Design Guidelines.
5. We support the creation of commercial enterprises and public resources that will enable our new neighbors to work, shop, and recreate within walking distance of their homes. However, we seek assurance that viability of downtown Glen Ellen businesses will not be undermined by competing businesses on the SDC site.
6. We are perplexed by the assumption that a new SDC community will somehow be "self-contained." Rather than focusing on how the new community will stand apart, we would like to hear more about how it will be integrated into surrounding communities and blend the campus with neighboring communities to the north and south, rather than creating an exclusive, out-of-context, urban community.
7. The question of how to quickly and safely evacuate large numbers of people in the event of fire and other emergencies is another big concern. While Oakmont was successfully evacuated during the Glass Fire, there have been many anecdotal reports of Oakmont residents spending hours in traffic while trying to evacuate. We welcome a comprehensive community safety plan that takes into account the SDC campus's proximity to open space, and that tailors redevelopment to the Wildland-Urban Interface transition zone.
8. Redevelopment of the SDC campus could disrupt the ability of animals to move safely through the pinch point in the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor comprised by the SDC. We

¹ Please note that numerous people interested in the workshop were not able to access the workshop, and many were not able to use the sticky note program; therefore their comments have not been recorded. There needs to be widespread solicitation of comments on the vision/principles prior to revision to ensure that the vision statement provided to the Board of Supervisors in January 2021 is well vetted.

encourage efforts to strengthen the wildlife corridor: fencing should be kept to a bare minimum, the riparian corridor should be enlarged by establishing greater setbacks, and reductions of the entire campus footprint should be considered wherever possible. We applaud the *Upper Sonoma Creek Restoration Vision* developed by the Sonoma Ecology Center (<https://sonomaecologycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Upper-Sonoma-Creek-Restoration-Vision-Booklet.pdf>) and believe it should be a factor in development of the Specific Plan.

9. We support a) the creation of a memorial park at the Eldridge Cemetery, and b) the protection of historical resources on the SDC campus site. In addition to rehabilitation of several buildings of historical significance and preservation of the landscapes in which they are situated, the Glen Ellen Historical Society's call for establishment of a Historical Preservation Area, including a museum, library, and visitor center, enjoys broad support. The SDC's lengthy legacy of care should carry forward into the future by providing housing for individuals with developmental disabilities and fostering a community where the causes of economic and social equity, sustainability, and mitigating climate change are supported.
10. More time is needed to complete the Specific Plan process. COVID, wildfires and evacuations, and PG&E public safety power shutoffs have all contributed to significant delays. In particular, the inability to meet in person to discuss the vision, as well as any alternatives, substantially interferes with the process of engaging the community in a real dialogue. To truly create a community-driven plan, the County must work with the State to obtain a time extension.

In closing, the local community treasures both the SDC property and the small town character of Glen Ellen. Galvanized by the opportunity to help shape the SDC's future, we stand firm in our desire to maintain its connectedness to our community. Change on such a large scale will not come without a certain degree of sacrifice on our part. In turn, we ask that the Planning Advisory Team (PAT), Permit Sonoma, Dyett and Bhatia, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, and all other participants involved in the creation of the Specific Plan pay close attention to the concerns of those who will most directly be affected by redevelopment of the site.

Sincerely,

SDC/Eldridge Committee of the Glen Ellen Forum

Betty Brachman, Glen Ellen resident

Cherie Brasset, Glen Ellen Communications Team; former SDC employee; Glen Ellen resident

Nick Brown, Chair, Glen Ellen Forum Steering Committee; Chair, Glen Ellen Forum Traffic and Safety Committee; Glen Ellen Historical Society Board of Directors; Glen Ellen resident

Mary Guerrazzi, owner, Wine Country Trekking, Glen Ellen resident

Vicki Hill, MPA, Land Use Planner; Glen Ellen resident

Alice Horowitz, Ph.D, Co-Chair, Glen Ellen Forum SDC/Eldridge Committee; Glen Ellen resident

Sanford I. Horowitz, Esq., Glen Ellen resident

Steve Lee, Glen Ellen resident

Gregg R. Montgomery, Vice President, Glen Ellen Historical Society; 44-year SDC employee

Teresa Murphy, Retired SDC Interim Administrative Services Director; Glen Ellen Historical Society Board of Directors; 42-year SDC employee; Glen Ellen resident

Angela Nardo-Morgan, North Valley MAC member; Vice President, Glen Ellen Forum Board of Directors; President, Glen Ellen Historical Society Board of Directors; Glen Ellen resident

Tracy Salcedo, Glen Ellen Forum Board of Directors; Sonoma Mountain Preservation Board of Directors; Glen Ellen resident

Diana Sanson, Glen Ellen resident

Jim Shere, Executive Director Emeritus, Glen Ellen Historical Society