

November 22, 2021

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors,

We are a coalition of about 30 organizations in Sonoma Valley. We tackle challenges and take positions that 1. advance a healthy local economy, 2. steward our environment, and 3. increase equity for our community members. We are paying a lot of attention to the future of Sonoma Developmental Center, because it provides an enormous opportunity in all three of these areas.

When you discussed SDC early this year, you all said you wanted to see a “transformational”, “visionary” outcome with a “generational” impact. We do, too.

You have no doubt heard about the Sonoma Valley public’s nearly universal, passionate rejection of the three land use alternatives.

**We ask you to direct Permit Sonoma and their consultants to re-construct the economic feasibility analysis underlying the SDC Specific Plan to include multiple public and philanthropic funding sources that can deliver greater public benefit over the first 20 years of SDC redevelopment.**

The land use alternatives for SDC so far do not provide much public benefit from this public land, because the proposals are constrained by a narrow economic analysis. The economic analysis so far ignores any future revenues from public or philanthropic sources. The only funds enumerated so far are from private free-market developers of residential or hotel projects. By contrast, the public benefits that the community wants—deeper levels of affordability, community services like a health clinic or nonprofit space, recreation, next-generation water and energy systems, educational and training programs, etc—will require public and philanthropic money.

Sonoma County’s agencies and nonprofits are extraordinarily successful at producing public benefits from public and philanthropic funding sources. Over the long time period that SDC will be redeveloped, these types of funds are as sure to materialize as private developer monies are.

Example public and philanthropic sources:

- State and federal funds and tax credits regularly tapped by nonprofit housing developers. Note that 100% affordable housing projects leverage local investment with state and federal funding at an average ratio of 7:1
- California's Community Economic Resilience Fund program
- Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds for remediation and affordable housing. The State Budget section "Scaling up development on state excess sites" (p. 94) allocates "\$45 million one-time Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to scale up excess land development with funding for site remediation and local government matching grants."
- Project Homekey and other state funds to reduce housing insecurity, build homes and provide social services
- Governor Newsom's Sept 23, 2021 legislative package of \$15 billion for climate action, for example to support an island-able microgrid at SDC, and other energy-related funders well known to Sonoma Clean Power
- workforce development grant programs
- Department of Water Resources sustainable groundwater and stormwater capture, and other water funders well known to Sonoma Water
- Build Back Better funds
- American Rescue Plan Act
- FEMA and similar funds to build disaster-ready communities
- Moore Foundation, Todd Trust, and other foundations who have already funded the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, for a trail system and campus design that protects wildlife connectivity
- Private philanthropy in Sonoma County, of the kind that built the Green Music Center and La Luz's new buildings

Another way to improve SDC's economics is to reduce the number of older buildings rehabbed. Our Collaborative's members do not seek historic preservation of more than one or two buildings.

Thank you for aiming high at SDC,

The Sonoma Valley Collaborative Steering Committee

**Kimberly Blattner**

La Luz Center, Board  
Member

**Richard Dale**

Sonoma Ecology  
Center, Executive  
Director; Chamber of  
Commerce, Board  
Member

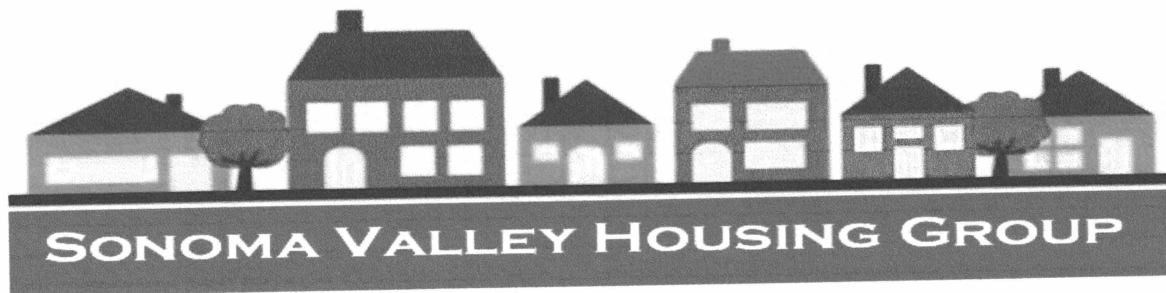
**Cynthia**

**Scarborough**  
Sonoma County Area  
Agency on Aging  
Advisory Council,  
Secretary; Vintage  
House Executive  
Director (retired)

**Tim Zahner**

Sonoma Valley Visitors  
Bureau, Executive  
Director





11/28/21

To: Permit Sonoma  
cc: Board of Supervisors  
Dyett & Bhatia  
Area Media

The Sonoma Valley Housing Group respectfully submits the following ideas for consideration concerning the redevelopment of the Sonoma Development Center.

### **Summary**

We support:

- INTERIM USE — of existing facilities for low-income housing.
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING — at the max, held in perpetuity, including an RV park.
- COMMUNITY FACILITIES — a plaza, community hall, park, sports fields.
- A SCHOOL — a performing arts theater, offices, an innovation center.
- PROTECTED OPEN SPACE — an adequate wildlife corridor.
- ADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION — to Santa Rosa and Sonoma.
- A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST — for financing and administration.
- A FOCUS ON SOCIAL EQUITY — especially for Latinx and other workers.
- NO TOURISM HOTEL OR RESORT — use public land for the public.

### **Interim Housing**

We support The [SDC Campus Project](#)'s proposal for interim use of existing group housing for low-income residents. Given the strong likelihood of a 5-year-or-more, drawn-out CEQA process with appeals and lawsuits, interim re-use makes great sense. Please take a fresh look and seriously consider the SDC Campus Project proposal.

### **Permanent housing**

We support a high number of lower cost, lower AMI units to cover vulnerable, disadvantaged populations such as Latinx, seniors, disabled, and working-class people generally. Rather than the proposed 75% market-rate, 25% affordable mix, we propose a 75% affordable, 25% market-rate mix.

The SDC exists in an urban service area (USA). Dense Valley infill development is appropriate. If the number of inclusionary units becomes dependent on the overall number of units, we



support higher numbers in order to get the maximum inclusion for the low-income cohort we represent.

All affordable units must be affordable in perpetuity.

The Sonoma Valley Housing Group is allied (and shares members) with the Valley-based Latinx grassroots group Food For All/Comida Para Todos. We request that decision makers account for the needs of this SDC neighbor especially — the Sonoma Valley Latinx cohort — as well as for all low-income residents of whatever race or ethnicity.

We call for innovative design alternatives that cost less to build — such as, for example, modular units, 3D-printed structures, or variable-sized, fire-resistant [Quonset hut kits](#), as featured in the New York Times.

We support including an RV park with permanent, monthly-rate, affordable spaces, to provide stable housing opportunities, including not more than 30% higher priced temporary tourist spaces with a two-week annual limit.

### **Community**

We call for public space at the SDC: a community building, a plaza, a park with grills and picnic tables, sports amenities: soccer, softball, volleyball. We support other community-service land uses such as education, performing arts, an office building, an innovation-center. A large housing effort will require schools. Space and funding for public education must be part of the plan. There is no room for yet another resort or hotel in the community we envision.

### **Environment**

We support an expansive wildlife corridor with a wider pinch point than currently exists, with 100-foot stream setbacks and no night lighting directed towards the corridor. Let's keep as much area for animals to pass through as possible. Insofar as the whole campus is fair game for night-time animal movements, housing and other buildings should be clustered, multi-story, and sound proof, with no fences allowed.

### **Transportation**

The plan must provide frequently scheduled public transportation to connect this development with Santa Rosa and Sonoma.

### **Financing**

We support a [Community Land Trust \(CLT\)](#) funding model to finance and control all land uses on the property. (The [Housing Land Trust](#) of Sonoma County might be an option for this function.) Any housing CLT at SDC needs to balance social equity and environmental interests equally.

The State should consider gifting the SDC to a CLT that represents the interests of all stakeholders. There could be one CLT for the core campus and another — a green land trust — for the open space.

If redeveloping the SDC represents a generational opportunity to show our collective best in design and planning, then a financing plan needs to rise to that challenge and not simply recap maladaptive, socially inequitable business-as-usual solutions. Public/private financing should be given a serious look. A public bank, such as being considered by a number of California cities, could underwrite development.

The State has made low-income housing a priority on the site (and throughout California), and it has run budget surpluses in excess of \$30 billion for two years running. Surely, some of that money can underwrite affordable housing on public property that has served the underprivileged for more than a century.

The State must assume responsibility for removing toxic waste and repairing the water and sewage systems, which it has left to deteriorate.

#### **Process**

The planning timeline has become much too short. Let's slow things down and get back the lost three or four months that were initially promised. Among other things, it appears that to date only a narrow bandwidth of economic-feasibility ideas have been considered. The public needs time to propose and demonstrate economically viable alternatives.

[signed]

The Sonoma Valley Housing Group

Fred Allebach

Ken Brown

Mario Castillo

Ann Colichidas

David Kendall

Jim McFadden

Dave Ransom

Frank Windes

Ann Wray

Norm Wray

### SDC Public Comment

My name is Collin Thoma and I am the Systems Change Advocate with Disability Services and Legal Center (DSLCL). I also sit on the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council and support their priorities for the project. I will be providing feedback on the report through a Disability focused lenses to help make sure the SDC accessible to all.

A priority in the final plan is to make sure that a good majority of the housing units built are affordable and accessible. There is a strong need for affordable and accessible housing in the Disability community. This is because many people with disabilities are lower income and may rely on Supplemental Social Security Insurance (SSI), Social disability Insurance (SDI) and/or other public benefits. This makes it harder to find housing as they are limited to affordable units and, the ongoing housing crisis makes finding an affordable unit even more challenging. It is also really hard to find housing that is accessible to those who use a wheelchair, scooter, walker or have another physical disability. These two problems make it much harder to find a place to live and, is one of many challenges and barriers people with disabilities have to face.

For the amount affordable housing the minimum should be 50% and close to 100% as possible. There should also be a relatively even mix of single and multifamily homes. These affordable homes should also stay affordable even if there is an increase in living in the area. For accessible housing an easy way to do this will be to create homes in Visitability method. The three main aspects of Visitability are to have a zero-step entrance(s) ideally at the front door, 32-inch pathways and doorways, a bathroom with grab bars and enough space to accommodate for a wheelchair. A benefit of building home using the Visitability method is it will not increase the cost of construction as the main features are minor adjustment. Building a home that uses the Visitability features from the start will also be much cheaper than remodeling a home with Visitability elements. Furthermore, the features of Visitability are small enough that if a family doesn't have a disability they will hardly notice those elements. A Visitable home will also make it easier for residents to age in place. The redevelopment of the SDC presents a great opportunity for build Visitable homes and will help pay homage/respect to the former patients of the SDC. While it is good to see an effort to create a good amount of housing units all the alternatives should have more housing built. A way to increase the number of housing units is to make at least some of the commercial buildings be mixed use.

An important aspect that was not mentioned in the plan and needs to be a high priority is to make sure the county has a robust evacuation plan. As already defined in the plan the area is in a very high fire danger area with limited roads to evacuate the area. With the increase of people and traffic it will put a strain on the road network in the area. If a good plan is not in place it can increase the traffic which can make an evacuation more dangerous. Furthermore, it can be harder and can take longer to evacuate people with disabilities. This is because they may need to bring medicine and/or medical equipment which can be bulky. If they have a physical disability then they will need to have a vehicle that can support them and their mobility device and may require assistance getting out of their home. Finally, if someone has a cognitive and/or mental disability they may need help in making sure they pack the right supplies. In addition, they may become confused or overwhelmed during the evacuation which may result in them needing more assistance.

Another priority needs to be improving the infrastructure in the area. Adding additional bus routes should be considered to provide easier access to Santa Rosa, Petaluma, to the coast and, other parts of the county. In addition to creating more routes there should also be more frequent buses. Having good public transit will not only reduce traffic it will also make it easier for people with disabilities who don't drive to get around the county. It could also allow them to visit parts of the county that wouldn't have been possible with good transit. For crosswalks that are on (or will be on) busy street like Arnold Drive should have signals that have both audio and touch queues when it is safe to cross. For the time to cross needs to be closely considered as it may take some with a physical disability longer to cross. There should be consideration on having a backup generator (if financially feasible) in case of a loss of power or a PSPS event. Having a backup generator will be good to have as people with disabilities may have medical equipment that needs power and without it puts their health and safety at risk.

The hotel isn't a good fit in the plan it does fit in with the characteristic of the area and is an attraction that isn't that inclusive (for residents and tourists) as it is more geared for attracting tourists. I understand the hotel is in the plan to help pay for the project but other alternatives should be considered. Instead of the hotel a museum with the history of the SDC or public event space both with paid admission should be considered instead. This will also allow for both locals and tourists to enjoy. A museum will do a good job in pay homage and respect to those who

lived and died at the SDC. If the museum is not created then something will need to be created to pay homage and respect to past SDC residents.

The three alternatives had some good parts to them but none were perfect and the creation of another alternative is needed. With that said bellow are the good parts from each alterative that I would like to see in what ever final plan will be.

Alternative A: The Community Hub/resource center (this should be a priority to have in the final plan) should have service such as childcare, elder services, and mental health services. Having these services are important as some of these services may not be available in the valley. If these services are provided it would make it much easier for those who need them to access them.

Alterative B: The empathies on perseveration, I understand that this will be expensive but given the SDC history it's important to have some preservation of the existing buildings. This alterative had the best housing numbers.

Alterative C: The proposed use of the main building and should be persevered. It was good to see the large amount square footage for commercial use buildings which can help increase job opportunities in the area. However, this should only be done if some a of these buildings is mixed use given the large amount of square footage for these commercial buildings.

In all plans it was good to see the creation and preservation of open space for trails and paths. A majority of these trails and paths should be paved and for those that are not should have a hard surface like hard compacted dirt. This will allow for those who use a wheelchair, scooter or walker to use these trails/paths. This is important to have as not having accessible trials is yet another barrier that people with disabilities face and will allow for everyone regardless of mobility level to enjoy the great trails around the SDC.

Thank You,

Collin Thoma

**Systems Change Advocate**

**Disability Services & Legal Center (DSLCL)**

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Santa Rosa, CA 95401

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Submitted to [engage@sdcspecificplan.com](mailto:engage@sdcspecificplan.com)

December 10, 2021

Dear SDC Specific Plan staff,

As teens of Sonoma Valley, we want our voices to be heard in the process of deciding the future of Sonoma Developmental Center. Young people have an important stake in the future of SDC and our voices have been underrepresented in the process. We hope our perspectives and advocacy will influence the future of SDC.

In October 2021, 14 teens who live in Sonoma Valley participated in events that included a discussion about what's working and not working for teens in Sonoma Valley, a tour of the SDC campus, and a discussion and questionnaire about future uses and features of SDC. Teen-led outreach around hopes for SDC is continuing.

These events were organized by Sonoma Valley Collaborative in partnership with Teen Services/Boys & Girls Club of Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Hanna Institute, Sonoma Valley for Healing Justice, ¡DALE!, and the GENup student club at Sonoma Valley High School. These youth-serving organizations endorse the principle of youth voice being factored into all decisions being made about the future of our community.

Below is a summary of teen participants' hopes for SDC:

- Safe, well-lit, well-maintained places for sports, like indoor and outdoor soccer fields and pools, and places for entertainment and recreation that welcomes youth. Live concerts and festivals. A hub for recreation, like the Sonoma Plaza.
- Affordable educational and skills training opportunities for youth and adults, especially monolingual Spanish speaking parents.
- Social services like those provided by La Luz (ESL) and Sonoma Valley Community Health Center.
- Jobs that pay well and provide internship opportunities, especially jobs focused on mitigating the climate crisis.
- Affordable places to eat, live, shop, all in one location.
- Accessible transportation, which is especially important for young people.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our perspectives.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Tellez, 12th Grade,  
Sonoma Valley High School

Sonoma Valley High School

Yahtziri Lopez, 12th Grade

Lily Gelb, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Academy

Solana Staes, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

Kannitha Hun, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

Victoria Hernandez-Padilla, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

Maxwell Savage, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

Kate Llodra, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

Lexi Oliveros, 10th Grade  
Sonoma Valley High School

In support of Sonoma Valley Teens,

Caitlin Cornwall  
Sonoma Valley Collaborative Program Director

Kim Jones  
Sonoma Valley Collaborative Coordinator





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Executive Director  
**Leonardo Lobato**

La Luz is a 501(c)3  
Nonprofit organization  
Tax ID # 68-0228235  
[www.laluzcenter.org](http://www.laluzcenter.org)

Legacy Giving ...  
please include  
La Luz Center in your  
estate planning

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Susan Gorin  
Supervisor, First District  
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Ref: Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan

Dear Supervisor Gorin,

The rebirth of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) is a rare opportunity to address the pressing issue of affordable housing in our community, an issue that greatly impacts the families La Luz Center serves.

Because of the everyday lived experience of our clients in the Sonoma Valley community, the number of services we provide to them, and the trends we observe, La Luz Center urges the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to maximize the number of affordable housing units in the SDC Specific Plan and, by doing so, significantly reduce the lack of affordable housing in Sonoma Valley and set the aspiration of the community we want to be.

The constant battle that people in Sonoma Valley face every day with housing affordability is illustrated by the words of one of La Luz's clients:

*"Throughout the year we struggle because we have to make sure we have enough money to pay the rent at the end of the month. This means that we have to also do with less [money] for food, clothing, medicines and paying other bills. Paying rent is where our wages go, and every year we get rent increases for a tiny rundown house in Boyes Hot Springs."*

La Luz Center strives to be a source of light and hope for our most vulnerable community members- from ensuring everyone has access to the most basic needs to building access to skills and providing our community with a sense of belonging.

In the last seven years, one issue stands out among the others –**the lack of affordable housing**. This comes to light through our community advocates' work in providing renters with eviction information, the continued partnership with Legal Aid of Sonoma County, which connects our families to a housing attorney, and our rental assistance program. These efforts are all a response to the root problem.

According to Generation Housing's 2021 report on Sonoma County housing needs, there is a shortfall of roughly 38,000 homes in our County. Almost 30,000 of these homes are needed in the neighborhoods of individuals and families earning below the median income. If we consider that Sonoma Valley's population is approximately 9% of the County's population, a quick extrapolation points to the possible deficit of thousands of affordable housing units in Sonoma Valley.

In their day-to-day work La Luz's advocates see multiple families crowded into single units and facing high rents, absentee or unresponsive landlords, and substandard structures while being charged market-rate prices. In 2021 alone, we have provided housing-related services to 399 people, from emergency rental assistance to tenant advocacy and housing searches. La Luz has recently experienced a rise in the demand for these services as the statewide eviction moratorium ended.

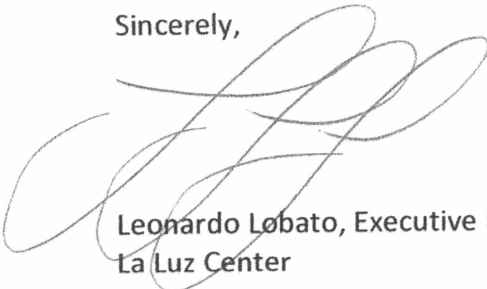
Another manifestation of the affordable housing issue, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is the 605 applications that individuals and families from Sonoma Valley have submitted since April to obtain rental relief funds from Sonoma County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program, ERAP. La Luz is the only participating organization in the Sonoma Valley that offers this vital program to the community.

Our local housing crisis is not only large in magnitude but also pressing. The lack of affordable housing and the high cost of living in Sonoma Valley are driving families and individuals away from the Valley. A somber illustration of this trend is found in the 2020 Census preliminary results, which shows that the Latino population in the Boyes Hot Springs census tract has declined by 17% in 10 years, before the pandemic and at an accelerating rate.

The social, economic, and cultural impact in our community is transformational, and not in a positive way. Sonoma Valley is losing vibrant, entrepreneurial, hardworking, and culturally diverse members of its community. This has a cascading effect with dire consequences for all in the Valley.

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) is a unique opportunity to significantly reduce the affordable housing need in Sonoma Valley and set the aspiration of the community we want to be: A community that offers every resident access to affordable and decent housing. La Luz Center urges the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to maximize the number of affordable housing units in the SDC Specific Plan.

Sincerely,



Leonardo Lobato, Executive Director  
La Luz Center

Cc: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors