

**02.10.2025 Press Democrat LTE**

## **Scale back plans for Sonoma Developmental Center**

Editor: As a Glen Ellen resident, I'm deeply concerned about the proposed redevelopment of the Sonoma Developmental Center. The plan for 990 new housing units would overwhelm Arnold Drive and Highway 12 — our only evacuation routes. During the 2017 Nuns Fire, we had gridlock and confusion. Adding thousands more residents without infrastructure upgrades isn't just shortsighted — it's dangerous.

Traffic delays don't increase gradually — they spike exponentially. That means longer emergency response times and slower evacuations when every minute counts.

The scale of this project is incompatible with our rural setting. Glen Ellen lacks the infrastructure, water supply and emergency services to absorb urban-level density. Invoking the “builder's remedy” to bypass environmental and safety reviews undermines public trust and misapplies AB 130, which was designed for urban areas — not high-risk and unincorporated rural zones like Glen Ellen.

If built to full density, the SDC site would reach about 7,286 people per square mile — nearly double Santa Rosa's density. A plan of 450-500 units, focused on workforce housing, would better serve our community without compromising safety or character.

— *Douglas D. Smith, Glen Ellen*