

The “Next Hundred Years” at SDC

A proposal by the people, for the people.

This proposal for the future of SDC is “*by the people*” because it was assembled from the ideas for the SDC that the community has shared, and broadly supported, over the past seven years. It is “*for the people*” because it will work, financially and practically, for the benefit of the community in the Sonoma Valley for the Next Hundred Years.

The proposal is founded on four widely held community principles:

- Keep the land at SDC in public ownership in perpetuity,
- Make sure the local community has a strong say in the future of the land,
- Protect the open space, and expand the wildlife and riparian corridors, and
- Choose a rural scale of development compatible with the Sonoma Valley

All are principles that the community has, over and over again, said that it wants - all have been ignored as each new plan comes up. It is time to secure them for ourselves and future generations.

In late August, we realized it was finally time to stop opposing things, and take a positive stand. September 9 was the State’s deadline. After that, if we did nothing, the SDC property could pass into private hands, lost to public ownership forever and to be traded on the open market for profit, while urban sprawl takes over our valley and the community has very little to say.

“We have to act now,” we realized. In only ten days a small group of volunteers assembled a proposal that could change the course of the SDC lands forever. The Glen Ellen Historical Society delivered it to the State on behalf of the community – and the community’s foot was in the door.

So how would the community accomplish all of these ideas? First, the land uses in the proposal look very much like the Historic Alternative now designated as the “environmentally superior alternative” in the County’s EIR and plan. It needs to be supported as the “Preferred Alternative” in the process now under way at the County.

The “super-sauce” of the proposal is the creation of the **Sonoma Mountain Community Services District** and the non-profit **Community Trust** that has long been advocated in the community. As an “independent special district,” the district will ensure local ownership and control and bind all the ideas into a working program. As an agency under State law, it can claim precedence in the bidding system for the SDC land and buildings. And as a district, it will represent all of the parts of Glen Ellen and the Sonoma Valley most affected by the future development at the SDC. It, too, will need community support, both to authorize the district and to elect its Board of Directors.

Much like our existing water and fire-districts, the new district will function independent of the County, except for zoning approvals. Financing for its mix of adaptive reuse and new affordable housing will be secured by the revenues and the value of the development on the land, with no financial obligation to the voters of the district. Implementation may even be entrusted to some of the same developers that are bidding for SDC, engaged by the district for their areas of specialty. The time to debate the details will come after the district is in place.

So now it is up to us all to help make this happen. Get informed. Speak up. Send letters to the decision makers. Vote when the time comes. Comments and questions to sdcnx100@gmail.com

By the people, for the people, for the next hundred years.

Summary of Proposal

- **The guiding principles and goals of the community:**
 - Public ownership of land in perpetuity
 - A strong hand for the community in decision making, long term
 - Protection of open space, wildlife corridors & riparian habitat
 - Scale compatible with a rural community, phased implementation
 - Balance of old (historic buildings and character) and new
 - A total of 470 units, most to be affordable (workforce, elders, owner & rental housing, all economic categories); 60% more affordable units than under the County's plan
- **Formation of the Sonoma Mountain Community Services District**
 - Formation included in enabling legislation for transfer of SDC properties to District
 - Established with cooperation of County & LAFCO
 - Streamlined process, w. help from Supervisor Gorin & Senators McGuire & Dodd
 - Precedents for legislation in Agnews DC transfer and Isla Vista CSD formation
 - Preliminary boundaries to include 3,500 voters in Glen Ellen & Sonoma Valley
 - Democratically elected Board of Directors
 - As agency, can access government funding
- **Formation of the Sonoma Mountain Community Trust**
 - 501(c)3 not-for-profit tax exempt organization
 - Brains-trust of experts & advisors to guide District's decision making
 - Managed independently by panel of Commissioners
 - As non-profit, can access foundation and donor funding
- **Priority standing claimed**
 - As agency, claims priority in State's disposition process for "Surplus Properties"
- **Land-uses** include balance of historic and new, open space and public space:
 - Historic preservation & adaptive reuse mix with new construction, all at village scale
 - 15-minute neighborhood
 - Commons – central green used for community gatherings, events, farmers market
 - Open space on Sonoma Mountain to be preserved
 - Wildlife corridor to be expanded to north and between Arnold and Sonoma Creek
 - Lake Suttonfield area in parks w. agricultural incubator for young farmers
 - Of 470 total housing units, most affordable, compatible w. rural scale and character
 - Main Building remains centerpiece – village center, plaza, shops, offices
 - Workforce jobs & skills training center in Chamberlain, adjacent housing
 - Homes for people w disabilities, studios for skills learning & self-expression
 - New housing, phased, stepped on slopes behind village center & south of Commons
 - School and day-care center to south – magnet to draw people to businesses of area
 - Homes along Arnold Drive preserved and reconditioned, part of historic character
 - Heritage area around Sonoma House w. museum, visitor center, small inn/hostel
 - Total includes 120+ owner occupied homes & duplexes, co-housing east of Arnold
 - Health clinic in Nelson
 - Single-resident housing in Corcoran, Bemis, Northern Star area
 - Environmental & climate-change research center near Oak Valley, SEC to anchor

- Operator-owned mini-bus system links to jobs & services, reduces need for cars
- **Compliance with State's Public policy goals** for affordable housing & financial capability
 - State's RFP standards required of all bidders for District projects, phase by phase
- **Utilities**
 - Village scale requires less infrastructure, less cost, leaves old utilities in the ground
 - Connect to existing trunk mains – capacity for water, wastewater services available
 - Microgrid solar & storage to provide low-cost power to support affordability of housing
- **Relationship of proposal to ongoing Specific Plan and EIR process** at the County
 - Embodies Historic Preservation Alternative in EIR, can influence process
 - Proposal will work within the umbrella of whatever EIR/SP is adopted
- **Ways to implement**
 - Pilot Programs include demonstration programs re:
 1. District as implementer of affordable housing in a rural setting
 2. Adaptive reuse of historic structures using advanced techniques
 3. Opportunity Zone business investment for fabrication of housing components
 - Parcel by parcel RFPs to responsible bidders – same process used by State, engages same specialists as in developer proposals
 - DBM (Design-Build-Manage) construction methods speed work & control costs
 - JPAs (Joint Powers Authorities) access tax exempt funding available to agencies
- **Funding**
 - Broad range of funding sources available – County, State, Federal
 - District has additional sources of innovative funding not conventionally available
- **Terms and conditions**
 - Lease-purchase agreement with State provides District with time to get started
 - Initial 55-year lease period – transfer to District of full title to be complete in early years
 - Subdivision map required for release of parcels - State to prepare
 - Right to sub-lease where needed provides flexibility
 - Phased parcel by parcel title transfer over time allows phasing & limits upfront cost
 - Revenue sharing agreement provides revenue to State & funding for District
 - State to use its revenues to create a fund for the benefit of people with developmental disabilities (successfully used in Agnews DC transfer)
 - Open space properties to be first transferred to District - District then to provide long-term leases to parks agencies, SLT – land retained in public ownership
 - Lease or transfer of water rights to District - District negotiates usage w. local agencies
 - Built in conditions allow community's withdrawal for cause if needed – protects District
 - Development self contained - no financial obligation to residents of the District without 66.66% voter approval.

Long term management of the SDC land and buildings for the people, by the people.

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