



January 31, 2024

Dear Senator Dodd, Senator McGuire, and Assemblymember Connolly,

It has come to our attention that a 50-acre parcel in the southeastern corner of the former Sonoma Developmental Center property has been carved out of acreage intended for preservation as public parkland for transfer to CalFire. It is our understanding that offices are to be built on what is presently, and was intended to remain, open space.

This “carve-out” was apparently agreed to outside the parameters of any public planning process, and is out of conformance with both the SDC Specific Plan approved by Sonoma County in 2022 and with the legislation authorizing the SDC planning process, which specifies the general parameters of parcels to be developed (e.g., the 180-acre core campus) and parcels to be set aside as parkland in perpetuity (e.g. 750 acres of open space surrounding the campus). (Section 14670.10.5(a)(9): *“It is the intent of the Legislature that the lands outside the core developed campus and its related infrastructure be preserved as public parkland and open space.”*)

We reiterate our gratitude for the recently announced transfer of approximately 650 acres of SDC open space to California State Parks, but we are deeply disturbed by the map we’ve seen showing the CalFire carve-out, which lies within the voter-approved community separator (Figure 1-4, SDC Specific Plan), encompasses a seasonal stream and pristine oak savanna, and abuts both the Eldridge Marsh and the western outlet of a Highway 12 underpass that has been identified as one of the ways wildlife safely traverses the highway to access the Mayacamas Mountains, part of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor.

In addition, we understand this parcel is linked to the campus by another carve-out that follows the route of a proposed road linking Arnold Drive to Highway 12 — a road that was only considered by Sonoma County as for emergency vehicle access (Figure 3-1, SDC Specific Plan), not as a link between development on the campus and development alongside the highway.

Given these disappointing developments, and pulling from our intimate knowledge of the land and the planning process, we hope you can address the following questions and concerns:

- Why is the proposed CalFire complex located in open space rather than on the core campus, where 410,000 square feet of commercial development that has been designated within the SDC Specific Plan?
- Who authorized this carve-out?
- Why is CalFire building in an area that burned in the 2017 Nuns Fire and that the state’s own Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps show boarder high and very high fire severity zones?
- What exactly is CalFire planning to build on this sensitive site?

- Will CalFire be abandoning its existing facilities along Highway 12 adjacent to Sonoma Valley Regional Park?
- Why was the community not informed of this drastic increase in development on the SDC property?
- Is it possible to rescind both the carve-outs for both CalFire the road and, instead, for CalFire and the California Department of General Services and/or DGS's chosen developer accommodate CalFire's needs on the developable campus.

An additional carve-out is identified on the map surrounding Camp Via within the boundaries of Jack London State Historic Park. To avoid being blindsided on potential development plans for that acreage and to ensure transparency, we request that those plans be disclosed immediately.

Finally, we request that before any further planning for the site takes place, boundaries for the new state parkland, inclusive of the CalFire carve-out, the roadway carve-out, and the Camp Via carve-out, be finalized.

We are forever grateful to CalFire for its heroic work during the 2017 Nuns Fire, and wholeheartedly support the agency's expansion as part of the existing development on the 180-acre campus. We are, however, fundamentally opposed to carving out an additional 50 acres for development in an environmentally sensitive and fire-prone area, and deeply disappointed to find out that this transaction has occurred without transparency.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Sonoma Mountain Preservation, we look forward to prompt responses to our questions.

Sincerely,

*Arthur Dawson*

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Chair  
Sonoma Mountain Preservation

*Tracy Salcedo*

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