

PULSE OF THE PUBLIC

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SDC lawsuit

EDITOR: The citizen groups' lawsuit challenging the Sonoma Developmental Center environmental impact report should be a wake-up call to the county planning department and the Board of Supervisors, who continue to dismiss community input and hire consultants to do their bidding.

The EIR consultants' analysis, for example, absurdly claimed that wildfire evacuation with nearly 1,000 workers and 2,500 residents would have virtually no impact on evacuation travel time, despite real world experiences of local residents who faced bumper-to-bumper traffic and long delays trying to evacuate during the 2017 Nuns and 2020 Glass fires.

Yet, despite nearly four years of county planning and hundreds of written and in-person public comments critical of the flawed and incomplete EIR and specific plan, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors voted to approve the plan and EIR at their December meeting.

True, the board scaled back housing units from 1,000 to 750 homes, yet simultaneously reduced the percentage of affordable units. Much of housing would therefore be market rate, meaning unaffordable.

The lawsuit co-plaintiffs support more housing with a smaller amount of market- rate housing, but at a scale appropriate to the surrounding community.

Padi Selwyn

Sebastopol

Redirecting growth

EDITOR: Our model for municipal economics might be backward. There is a general assumption that more industry and jobs equal more tax revenue and more vibrant communities. More industry also attracts more people, thus per capita social services don't increase.

Perhaps industry should be equated to population growth, not revenue. Sonoma County's robust population brought with it horrible financial burdens

is plentiful (or small reservoirs could be built), the scenery is beautiful and the air is clean. But there are no jobs. A statewide initiative, led by the governor, to reposition major employers to those areas might help disperse the state's many residents.

This may not be the answer, but we do desperately need one. In California future, population growth is projected to focus in already-stressed coastal communities. Can we please begin serious discussion about a new direction?

Rick Roberts

Penngrove

Human trafficking awareness

EDITOR: January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Most residents of Sonoma County aren't aware of the magnitude of the problem here, but it is real.

Liza Diaz-McQuaid and I started Redemption House in 2018. Today Redemption House assists survivors in many ways, including the only peer support group in Sonoma County. We assist with clothing for job interviews, building resumes and applying for jobs. Our street outreach provides basic education, hygienic supplies, contraceptives and other resources when victims are ready to receive them. Our monthly support group averages 10-15 survivors from all walks of life and ethnicities.

Since we started Redemption House, it has helped 137 women who have experienced forced labor and other forms of exploitation. Training sessions have been held for law enforcement, schools and social service groups.

We are excited to announce our fundraiser at 4 p.m. Saturday at the Balletto Vineyard Event Center. Our event will feature survivors sharing their stories and testimony about how Redemption House assisted them in their healing

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for housing, an overstressed aquifer and congested roads, not to mention 2,700 people living on the streets who we have little ability to help.

The long road forward: Some have suggested a southern border wall to stop hordes from Marin — just kidding.

There are dozens of small communities in the Sierra foothills where real estate is cheap, local water

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journey and assimilating into life without exploitation. For more information, go to redemptionhouseofthebayarea.org.

Elizabeth Quiroz

Santa Rosa

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