



**SONOMA GROUP OF THE
REDWOOD CHAPTER**
P.O. Box 466
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

sierraclub.org/redwood/sonoma

January 13, 2022

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

VIA EMAIL

Re: Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan – New Alternatives Needed

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,

Sierra Club Sonoma Group urges the Board of Supervisors to reject the three alternatives proposed for the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) Specific Plan and to develop new alternatives for the historic campus that:

- 1) Fully protect SDC open space and wild lands in perpetuity including the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor and Sonoma Creek;
- 2) Offer appropriate redevelopment of the rural campus focused within the existing building footprint for housing those most in need;
- 3) Address the climate emergency, greenhouse gas emissions and associated extreme events such as wildfires and flooding; and
- 4) Serve the communities adjacent to the site, Sonoma Valley, and Sonoma County as a whole as consistent with existing General Plans, Housing Element and growth or population projections.
- 5) The new alternatives should include a public option for the entire property and instead of selling it to a private developer.

Sierra Club also requests that the Board of Supervisors ask our state legislators act to provide more time and resources to create a visionary plan that honors and serves the best interests of the people and lands of Sonoma County and the State of California.

Discussion

Sierra Club supports the immediate permanent protection of the 745 acres of open space and transfer to state and regional parks. We are most concerned about the SDC Specific Plan alternatives for the 200-acre historic campus.

As proposed the Sonoma Development Center Specific Plan alternatives Sonoma County planners proposed three similar variations of urban-style development on the historic campus that featured hundreds of single-family homes, a new hotel, restaurants, and commercial and office space, and a new road.

All three alternatives would drastically increase driving and associated Vehicle Miles Traveled and Greenhouse Gas Emissions and undermine decades of city-centered growth policies. The plans also conflict with Sierra Club's Climate, Housing and Infill policies as well as local, county, regional and state polices to reduce climate-changing emissions, achieve equitable housing and preserve biodiversity.

While the alternatives refer to protection of the existing open space and wildlands, they do not address how or when those lands will be protected in perpetuity. They also fail to provide adequate environmental protections for the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor and Sonoma Creek, both of which have regional significance.

The proposed housing is for up to 1,200 new single-family homes, 75 percent market rate. The greatest need is for low-income affordable housing and the plans should reflect that reality. The number of homes needs to be scaled back significantly to align with the rural nature of the lands and to focus on housing for those most in need, specifically developmentally disabled per the state legislation. Based on our analysis, 50 to 100 units of housing is more appropriate; and should be contained within existing footprint and/or rehabbed buildings if possible.

State Legislation

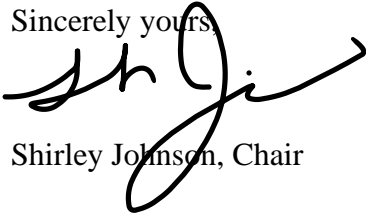
State legislation requires the conservation of SDC's open space, prioritizing affordable housing as determined to be appropriate for the property, as well as to increase land values, expedite marketing, and maximize interested third-party potential purchasers.

The state legislation constrains the planning and re-use. It was written in 2019 before the state surplus, before COVID, and before many new climate, housing and conservation investments and polices were adopted by the Newsom administration. For example, SDC's open space lands could be incorporated into the State of California's new initiative to conserve 30 percent of the state's lands by 2030, known as 30 X 30.

Action Requested

Sierra Club Sonoma Group believes that the Board of Supervisors reject the proposed SDC Specific Plan Alternatives, delay a vote and direct staff to develop new alternatives, and request that the State of California extend the deadline for a plan and revisit the state legislation for the repurposing of SDC.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shirley Johnson', written over the typed name below.

Shirley Johnson, Chair

Sonoma Group Executive Committee-Shirley Johnson (Chair), Richard Sachen, Tom Conlon, Theresa Ryan, Dan Mayhew, Ellen Hathaway