

To the Department of Developmental Services:

I live in Sonoma Valley and know Sonoma Development Center as an extremely important resource for families with loved ones who need its services, an employer of local residents and as the beautiful land it is and its importance to wildlife. My vision for SDC transition is much like the coalition of local organizations, Transform SDC that have spoken and written to voice local residents' thoughts of not just closure, but a practical vision of preserving the valuable and irreplaceable amenities on the site, the professionals who provide those caring services for current residents and protecting the land for posterity.

I drive through SDC regularly and see clients being able to sit outside on benches, go for rides in the open tram, walk with or be wheeled by their assistant, and one man who regularly tosses small stones for hours into the creek.

I think there is a pile of gravel by the bridge just for him. None of this can happen in an urban or residential care home. SDC clients cannot interact with or be accepted by neighbors of private care homes so their freedom would be gone.

The infirmary where clients are known and professionals know their needs, the specialized shoe shop and so many other amenities are not possible elsewhere.

In addition, I believe that expanding the rural agricultural history that began and existed at this special place for decades can be valuable to our military service people who so urgently need medical, physical and emotional care.

It is the perfect place for Wounded Warriors to receive therapy that they need and a place to rest, recuperate and heal from PTSD and other emotional scars. It is a known fact that gardening, caring for horses and dogs, learning a new skill or trade is a step in the healing process. I am sure that private and government sources can be found to fund such a program and organizations who specialize in these healing practices would love to have such a beautiful place for their work. The barns, fields and equipment are all there.

The state needs income. Private care facilities can rent buildings to care for those with certain needs and benefit from the specialized shops on site. People who need more can benefit from the current program. Non-profits and certain businesses can rent buildings. The Presidio in San Francisco is an example.

It is imperative that the Department of Developmental Services be open to hear and work with the Transform SDC coalition of organizations and local residents to come up with a practical solution. When an asset is gone, it is forever.

Bonnie Brown

