

July 13, 2022

RE: Springs Municipal Advisory Council comments on the Springs Specific Plan EIR

Delivered by E-mail

Dear Supervisor Gorin,

Our Concerns

Once the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is approved, the next step is approval by the Board of Supervisors for one of the proposed Alternative Plans. Opportunities for changes of the Springs Specific Plan (SSP) are essentially over. Given the length of the documents and time taken to produce the SSP and DEIR the tight comment period is inadequate. Our primary concern is the change in economic reality in the Springs since 2015. Intervening structural and economic changes in Sonoma County and the country have caused the economic reality to worsen for our residents.

- **Time** between inception of planning (2015) for the SSP and the final product in 2022. Significant and unexpected changes have taken place in the Springs Community. Wildfires beginning in 2017, inception of the COVID pandemic in 2019 and resulting inflation have caused significant changes. Loss of income for many, increases in the costs of housing and the ability of very low to median income individuals and families to afford housing. Problems already rampant in the Springs Community were intensified.
- **The** SSP addresses the physical aspects of the Springs but not the human composition of the Springs.

Economic concerns are primary objections to the plans as they stand. The DEIR and SSP downplay the economic reality of the Springs area. The Planners have classified the effect of the resulting actions caused by plans as 'Less than Significant'. We assure that this is not true for the people of the Springs who will live the reality of which ever plan is chosen.

- Displacement of Springs community members by gentrification is inherent in the plans. As well, displacement will occur as the plans are implemented. Public meetings to provide input for the SSP emphasized the desire and need of the community to avoid displacement of vulnerable residents and avoid gentrification. Intervening time has worsened economic conditions for vulnerable persons. Ignoring this reality is unacceptable. Actions must be included in the DEIR and SSP that provide robust mitigation measures.
- **Maintaining** a diverse and vibrant Springs population. Our population is ethnically, racially, economically and age mixed. As a community we continue to learn to live with each other and grow from our mutual experiences. We realize that at times our aspirations exceed our actions.

Consider life in Sonoma Valley without the Springs

- **Economic** health of the entire Valley depends on workers who make their homes here. The jobs of many wage workers do not pay enough for the necessities. It is well documented that most public service workers as well as lower wage earners cannot afford to buy a home.
- **Realistically** residents draining out of the Springs create problems for local businesses in lost revenues due to staffing shortages including business closures due to lack of staffing.
- **We cannot forget other residents.** The non-wage earners—children, stay at home parents, retired people, permanently disabled, extremely low income and homeless persons. We are a whole community. We must consider everyone living in the Springs, no matter their economic reality.

For these reasons we challenge Permit Sonoma staff to make provisions to fit the reality of the Springs and our sincere desire for an inclusionary community.

- Suggestions include provisions to maximize participation by experienced low-cost housing developers, emphasize affordability at all stages of planning and construction, encourage modest ADUs, and provide intermediate housing for people displaced from their homes by new construction.

Last, but not least. We urge robust attention be turned to open space for community recreation and gathering. The Plaza location is indeed historic, although smaller than the original space. What is designated is little more than a parking lot in a commercial area. It is not too much to ask for more space to be found and provision for actually starting to moving forward on a Springs Community Plaza. The residents of the Springs provide economic advantage to the Sonoma Valley and by extension, Sonoma County.

Sincerely,

cc Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma City Council, North Sonoma Valley M.A.C.