

Proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for Eldridge

(former site of the Sonoma Developmental Center)

Proposed Eldridge Vision Statement

Eldridge is a place where people of diverse backgrounds and interests live and work together, where natural resources are conserved and enhanced, concepts of sustainability and resiliency are put into practice, cultural legacies are honored, and compatibility with surrounding communities is preserved.

Proposed Guiding Principles for the Eldridge Specific Plan

Drawing on the expertise and talent in the region, a community-led, public-private partnership will plan the future of Eldridge through the County's specific plan process to address local challenges and create a higher quality of life in the Sonoma Valley. These principles provide the necessary level of detail to guide a specific planning process.

1. **Protection of open space on the Eldridge property:** Eldridge's open space and wildlife corridor lands will be permanently protected and managed to ensure environmental stewardship and continued public recreational use.
2. **Principles of sustainability for the future use of Eldridge:** Planners and decision-makers will use recognized principles of land use planning sustainability to gauge how well proposed land uses protect public trust resources and fit the character and values of the site and surrounding area, as well as benefit local communities and residents. The density, scale, and design for new development or redevelopment at Eldridge must be compatible with surrounding communities and Sonoma Valley's constrained water resources and transportation system, and all development must be supported by sound infrastructure and appropriate public services.
3. **A community-led specific plan for Eldridge:** Stakeholders will create a specific plan for the Eldridge site that factors in the needs and land use priorities of the surrounding communities of Glen Ellen and Sonoma to ensure that future development will be compatible with existing land uses in Sonoma Valley. The planning process will have financial support from the state, and Sonoma County will exercise oversight and management in coordination with a Technical Advisory Committee and a Citizens Advisory Committee.
4. **Development of housing options:** Sonoma County faces an acute housing crisis and the SDC site presents an opportunity to accommodate reasonable housing solutions for the area. An appropriate housing footprint on the Eldridge property should be a priority for the specific plan. Housing should be based on the needs of Sonoma Valley with a workforce housing emphasis, inclusion of an affordable housing component (very low, low, and moderate Income), and housing for vulnerable populations.
5. **Development of new educational and employment opportunities for Sonoma Valley:** Redevelopment will include replacement of economic and social benefits lost with the closure of the Sonoma Developmental Center. New institutional partners may include universities, colleges, government agencies, tribal entities, and nonprofit organizations, with the goal of expanding educational options, providing job training, and creating economic opportunities close to home. Important themes include providing green jobs and honoring SDC's legacy as an institution caring for people with developmental disabilities and other vulnerable populations.
6. **Preservation of historic and cultural sites:** The site's numerous historic, cultural, and Native American resources will be protected following state and local historic preservation guidelines.
7. **Implementation:** A governance entity will be considered for implementing the community's vision for Eldridge, embracing the concepts of environmental and economic sustainability and designed to represent state and local interests for the redevelopment process and ongoing operations.

Background

Since 2012, a coalition of nonprofit and community organizations has been working with Sonoma County agencies and departments to plan for the anticipated closure and repurposing of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). Beginning in 2015, the SDC Coalition launched the “Transform SDC” Project, which has served as an educational and organizing platform to imagine a new future for SDC after its closure as a residential hospital for people with developmental disabilities in December 2018.

Permit Sonoma will be launching a \$3.5 million land use planning process to create a “specific plan” for Eldridge—the place name and census tract for the SDC property. The specific plan is needed to represent the community’s vision and facilitate the site’s redevelopment, and also to meet various statutory priorities for reuse contained in the State of California’s FY 2019–2020 budget, which is funding the County’s planning work. The specific plan process is anticipated to begin in September 2019 and must be completed by December 2021.

A committee made up of representatives from the Glen Ellen Forum, the Sonoma Ecology Center, and the Sonoma Land Trust has drafted this proposal for organizational consideration and endorsement, and public review and discussion. The draft vision statement and guiding principles emerged from the many public meetings, workshops, and interviews conducted between 2015 and 2018, and we hope this document will inform the next phase of our community’s conversation about the future of SDC.

Resources

1. February 2019 **“Land and Water Protection Proposal”** developed by the Land Committee of the SDC Coalition, (linked to principle #1)
2. February 2017 **Sustainability Principles for Changes at Sonoma Developmental Center** by Sonoma Ecology Center (linked to principle #2)
3. August 2018 **WRT “Existing Conditions Assessment”** establishes different zones for the SDC property that are recommended for specific land use designations and uses. These zones should be used to ensure transfer of the “Land Protection Zones” (Zones A and B) into state and county park ownership, and to focus redevelopment and specific planning efforts in Zone C (linked to principles #1-4)
4. **Sonoma Institute** model under development by Sonoma Ecology Center (linked to principle #5)
5. The Glen Ellen Historical Society’s 2018 **planning document**. (linked to principle #6)
6. The vision for the **Eldridge Cemetery** conceived by the Parent Hospital Association. (linked to principle #6)
7. **Transform SDC** Project. (linked to Background)
8. Sonoma County’s **Request for Proposals: Sonoma Developmental Center Site**. (linked to Background)
9. State of California’s **trailer bill language** for Fiscal Year Budget 2019–2020. (linked to Background)