

Timeline of SDC Milestones

Transformation of the former Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property in Glen Ellen from public institution serving the developmentally disabled to something else began in 2015. Here's a timeline of significant events in the history of the institution and the redevelopment process.

– **1891:** The California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children opens on a 1,600-acre property at the base of Sonoma Mountain in a new community dubbed Eldridge. Over the next century the institution undergoes name changes and changes in focus, including a dark period defined by eugenic sterilizations. It became the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) in 1986, and was dedicated to the care of people with developmental disabilities.

– **1960s–1970s:** With passage of the Lanterman Act and associated legislation, the state of California began phasing out its developmental centers and placing clients in community-based care facilities.

– **2015:** A timeline for closure of the SDC is announced.

– **October 2017:** Nuns Fire burns significant SDC acreage on the east side of Arnold Drive, as well as much of Glen Ellen. – **December 2018:** The last client leaves the SDC. California's Department of General Services takes over management of the facility from the Department of Developmental Services, declaring the entire ~950-acre property surplus and up for sale.

– **2019:** State lawmakers broker legislation creating a three-year, \$3.5 million specific planning process. The legislation prioritizes preservation of about 750 acres of open space and creation of affordable housing on the 180-acre campus. Permit Sonoma hires consulting firm Dyett & Bhatia to develop the SDC Specific Plan and accompanying environment impact report (EIR).

– **December 2022:** After years of debate, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approves the SDC Specific Plan and EIR, rubberstamping construction of up to 750 homes and 400,000 square feet of commercial space, including a resort hotel, on the campus.

– **January 2023:** Sonoma County Advocates for a Liveable Environment (SCALE) and Sonoma County Tomorrow Inc. file a lawsuit challenging compliance of the SDC Specific Plan's EIR with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

– **April 2023:** DGS selects Eldridge Renewal LLC to redevelop the SDC campus. Eldridge Renewal is composed of Napa-based Rogal & Partners, spearheaded by Keith Rogal, and the Grupe Company, a housing developer based in Stockton.

– **August 2023:** Eldridge Renewal submits a project application to Permit Sonoma just before the Board of Supervisors approves its state-mandated Housing Element and secures a controversial fast track for the project under SB 330, the builders remedy legislation.

- **January 2024:** About 750 acres of open space surrounding the SDC campus is transferred to California State Parks. However, about 50 acres of open space in the southeast quadrant of the property is later carved out of the designated parkland and set aside for a new CalFire headquarters and training facility.
- **October 2024:** Judge Bradford DeMeo finalizes his scathing ruling in favor of SCALE and Sonoma County Tomorrow in the CEQA challenge, sending both the SDC Specific Plan and EIR back to the county for significant revision.
- **December 2024:** The Board of Supervisors decertifies the SDC Specific Plan and EIR, but opts to keep the planning process in place. Permit Sonoma, the county planning agency, heads back to the drawing board.
- **January 2025:** A second lawsuit is filed in county court, this time by Sonoma Valley Next 100, a community advocacy group. The suit asks the court to set aside Eldridge Renewal's selection as the preferred purchaser and to prohibit the Department of General Services from selecting another purchaser until after a specific plan for the property is in place, among other things.
- **March 2025:** Permit Sonoma approves Eldridge Renewal's project application and the environmental review process for a redevelopment that includes 990 dwelling units, a 150-room resort hotel, 130,000 square feet of commercial space, and more than 3,000 parking spaces on the 180-acre site begins.
- **April 2025:** DGS announces funding for "warm shutdown" of the campus, including provision of security and maintenance services, will end on June 30. It's unclear exactly what that means, or who will be responsible for those services going forward.
- **May 2025:** The Board of Supervisors authorizes consulting firm Dyett & Bhatia to revise the SDC Specific Plan and EIR — the same consulting firm that produced the first EIR, which fell well short of complying with environmental law, sparking outcry from stakeholders.
- **July 2025:** Funding expires for maintenance of the campus. The lights go out, maintenance of buildings and landscaping ceases, leaving only a skeleton crew of security personnel on the property.
- **September 2025:** Sonoma Valley Next 100 narrows the focus of its lawsuit against the Department of General Services. In addition to rescinding the Eldridge Renewal selection, the advocacy group asks the court to require protection of historic assets on the property.
- **Spring and summer 2026:** A number of water main failures and building break-ins are reported by local citizens, who also cry foul on the state for neglecting to maintain the deteriorating campus infrastructure and landscaping. Following a water main break, fire hydrants on the north side of the campus are rendered inoperable. The Department of General Services declines to comment on the vandalism and neglect, citing ongoing legislation. California Conservation Corps crews chip away at the high grass and fallen trees over the course of the summer months.
- **Summer 2026:** California State Parks begins hosting events and guided hikes in the new SDC Open Space.

– **August 2026:** Permit Sonoma Director Scott Orr, at a meeting of the Glen Ellen Forum, outlines the process that will follow release of the new draft specific plan and draft EIR (DEIR) for the campus, which is expected sometime in September. A 45- to 60-day public comment period will follow the DEIR release, and because of the builders remedy, only five public hearings, including the culminating hearing before the Board of Supervisors, will be held. Dates for the comment period and public meetings are pending.