

Community workshops on SDC Specific Plan policies slated

Meetings overlap with deadline for feedback on scoping for site's EIR



Meetings are slated for policies that will be part of the specific plan for redevelopment of the Sonoma Developmental Center. Photo by Paul Goguen

By Tracy Salcedo

Permit Sonoma, the county agency leading the specific planning process for redevelopment of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) in Glen Ellen, has slated two community workshops to gather public feedback on policies for the specific plan.

The virtual workshops are scheduled for Tuesday, March 22, at 5:30 p.m., and Saturday, March 26, at 10:00 a.m. Content for the two meetings is expected to be different, so stakeholders should plan to attend both events. Permit Sonoma will also

hold an in-person workshop, exclusively in Spanish, on Friday, March 25, at 11 a.m., at La Luz Center in the Springs.

Bradley Dunn, policy manager with Permit Sonoma, offered an example of a specific plan policy, saying it could be something like, “Circulation shall include safe access for various modes of transportation such as walking and biking.” No further information about the format or content of the workshops was available from Permit Sonoma at press time.

Vicki Hill, a land use planner from Glen Ellen, offered some insight into what might be addressed in the policy workshops. “The focus will be on gaining public input on what the guiding goals and policies should be for the site,” she explained. “An example of a goal — what we want to achieve — would be preserving the natural resources of the site. Examples of associated policies — how we achieve that goal — would be creating substantial buffers for wetland and creek areas, protecting native plants and reducing habitat fragmentation, and establishing groundwater recharge areas within the campus and surrounding area.”

The workshops may also cover “more specific design policies that may be established for building heights, creek setbacks, wildlife corridor protection, etc.,” she said.

“The wide range of topics may also include street configuration, landscaping, building architecture, public space design, energy efficiency, open space interface, project phasing, construction practices, etc. It is important for the public to weigh in on these topics.”

Stakeholders interested in attending the community workshops on specific plan policies will be able to register for the

meetings at SDCspecificplan.com, Dunn said. The registration information was not posted on the website as of the press deadline.

Dates for the specific plan policy workshops straddle the deadline for another important milestone in the planning process for the SDC. County planners are currently accepting public comment on the scope of the environmental impact report (EIR) for the redevelopment, which is required by the California Environmental Quality Act. The deadline for submission of written comments on EIR scoping is Friday, March 25; comments should be sent to Project Planner Brian Oh at Brian.Oh@sonoma-county.org.

The EIR will address the impacts of redevelopment on aesthetics, air quality, biological and cultural resources, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, noise, housing, transportation, wildfire, and more. The proposed scope of the EIR is laid out in the Notice of Preparation for the EIR, which is posted at sdcspecificplan.com and at <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/2022020222>. Information about the EIR process and how to prepare comments is available on eldridgeforall.org, and the process was described in detail in a Kenwood Press article published Feb. 15.

Questions about the specific plan, the EIR scoping process, and the upcoming policy workshops should be directed to Oh at (707) 565-1931 or Brian.Oh@sonomacounty.org, or to Dunn at (707) 321-0502 or Bradley.Dunn@sonomacounty.org.