



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/25/2022

To: County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma
Staff Name and Phone Number: Brian Oh (707) 565-1931
Vote Requirement: Informational Only
Supervisorial District(s): First

Title:

3:00 PM -Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan: Project Description Framework

Recommended Action:

Receive staff presentation and offer comments on the project description framework for Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan. (First District)

Executive Summary:

In December 2018, the State of California closed the Sonoma Developmental Center, a residential care facility that had been in operation for 125 years. During the closure process, the State enacted a statute authorizing the County of Sonoma to adopt a specific plan guiding redevelopment of the 930-acre campus. The statute prescribes that the plan focus on: 1) open space preservation; 2) affordable housing, including units serving people with developmental disabilities; and 3) economic feasibility. The statute provides three years from enactment to complete the process - 31 December 2022.

On December 17, 2019, the Board of Supervisors Authorized the Director of Permit Sonoma to (1) execute an agreement with the State of California and accept \$3.5 million from Department of General Services to prepare a Specific Plan and associated environmental impact report for the SDC site; and (2) execute an agreement with Dyett and Bhatia to prepare the Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report in of the amount of \$1,475,949.

The project team worked with the community to develop a vision and set of guiding principles, which were presented to the Board of Supervisors in January 2021. Since then, staff completed additional work, including advice from the project's Planning Advisory Team (PAT) during 7 meetings throughout the year, to inform a set of alternatives that was released November 2021. The report presents three alternatives to create a project description upon which the specific plan would be drafted and an environmental impact report (EIR) would be prepared.

To spur community comment, the report outlines three land use alternatives, all of which dedicate 750 acres of the 930 acres to open space preservation/park expansion. In the remaining 180 acres, the alternatives provide options for different mixes of civic, residential, commercial, and institutional development while protecting riparian corridors, preserving local agriculture, and protecting historic buildings through adaptive reuse. In December 2021, staff completed a community engagement plan that included two community workshops with over 250 participants, 5 community meetings and an online survey with over 720 entries.

Based on community comment, staff have drafted a project description framework that borrows attributes from each of the alternatives and advances critical concepts focusing on: 1) expansion of the wildlife corridor; 2) greater protection of riparian corridors; 3) increased distance of development from the wildland urban interface; 4) a higher concentration of housing types in west campus; 5) enhanced and better-connected inner campus green spaces; and 6) a better coordinated mobility system, including emphasis on non-auto travel through campus and creation of a new vehicular connection to extend Harney Drive to Highway 12.

The purpose of this meeting is to receive Board and public comments on staff's efforts to date. Based on Board of Supervisors discussion and additional community input taken during public comment, staff will prepare the project description to allow for preparation of the draft Specific Plan and draft Environmental Impact. Two public hearings will be held before the Planning Commission in July and August 2022 before returning to the Board of Supervisors in September 2022 with a recommendation to certify a final Environmental Impact Report and to adopt a final Specific Plan.

Discussion:

Background

The Sonoma Developmental Center is located in Eldridge, in unincorporated Sonoma County, near the community of Glen Ellen and is composed of a developed campus covering approximately 180 acres and approximately 750 acres of open space adjacent to the Sonoma Valley Regional Park and the Jack London State Historic Park. The Sonoma Developmental Center opened in 1891 and was a state-run residential care facility dedicated to serving individuals with developmental disabilities. At its peak, the facility served over 3,700 clients and employed 1,300 people. In the October 2015 Plan for the Closure of the Sonoma Developmental Center, the State Department of Developmental Services recognized the unique natural and historic resources of the property and acknowledged that it was not the intent of the state to follow the traditional state surplus property process. The State Department of Developmental Services concluded residential operations at the Sonoma Developmental Center in December 2018 after successfully relocating all residents to homes in the community. With the campus closed for developmental services, the property continues to be maintained and managed by the state Department of General Services.

In December 2019, the County of Sonoma and the State of California completed an agreement on a three-year planning and disposition process for the redevelopment of the Sonoma Developmental Center. Through state legislation in Government Code Section 14670.10.5, the County and State identified a number of parameters for the planning and disposition process.

1. The County to develop a specific plan for the property and to manage the land use planning process integrated with a disposition process for the property, to be carried out by the State Department of General Services
2. The planning process shall facilitate the disposition of the property by amending the general plan of the county and any appropriate zoning ordinances, completing any environmental review, and addressing the economic feasibility of future development
3. An expeditious planning of future land uses for the site and an opportunity for community input, with the intent to reduce uncertainty, increase land values, expedite marketing, and maximize interested third-party potential purchasers

4. Permanent protection of the open space and natural resources to the greatest extent feasible
5. Housing as a priority and shall include affordable housing with priority given to housing for individuals with developmental disabilities
6. Consider options for the appropriate protection of the Eldridge Cemetery

Vision and Guiding Principles

In January 2021, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors received a staff presentation summarizing work with the community that resulted in draft Vision and Guiding Principles to guide the SDC Specific Plan. At the conclusion of the Board workshop, staff developed the following Vision and Guiding Principles that provided the planning team with a foundation for its planning process.

Vision

The former Sonoma Developmental Center is reinvigorated as a vibrant and sustainable community in the heart of Sonoma Valley. A mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented core provides a diverse array of housing choices, and serves as a magnet of innovation, research, education, and visitation. The surrounding open spaces flourish as natural habitats and as agricultural and recreational land linked to regional parks and open space systems. Development builds on the site's rich historic legacy while meeting contemporary needs, emphasizing resiliency and sustainable building practices. Civic uses, community gathering places, and events attract visitors from Glen Ellen, Eldridge, and the broader Sonoma region, making the center a hub of community life in Sonoma Valley.

Guiding Principles

1. Promote a Vibrant, Mixed-Use Community.
2. Emphasize a Cohesive Sense of Place and Walkability.
3. Integrate Development with Open Space Conservation.
4. Balance Redevelopment with Existing Land Uses.
5. Promote Sustainability and Resiliency.
6. Support Housing Development and Provide a Variety of Housing Types.
7. Balance Development with Historic Resource Conservation.
8. Promote Multi-Modal Mobility.
9. Ensure Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability.
10. Embrace Diversity.

Conceptual Alternatives for Public Discussion

With these redevelopment parameters in mind, the County published three conceptual site plans in November 2021 and facilitated a series of virtual community engagement discussions in December 2021. Furthermore, an online survey was publicized through news and social media and the 6,000+ project mailing list, and a total of 720 participants took the survey. Participant demographics skewed toward being older and more Caucasian than in Sonoma County as a whole (48% 65+ compared to 19% for County population as a whole, about 10% non-Caucasian compared to 37% for the County) . The Survey Report provides overall responses, but also "normalized" responses and differences between different demographic groups where there are significant differences. Many respondents expressed a desire for lower levels of development overall, but other commenters wanted to see more housing on the site than the alternatives proposed, and many comments referenced the need in the area for both income-restricted affordable housing and workforce housing. Other themes that emerged from the comments were support for well-paying jobs at

the site, a split between those who supported and opposed some type of hotel, and a desire for community and commercial spaces on the site such as performing arts venues, museums, restaurants, bars, and small locally-owned shops.

In an effort to expand the County's reach in hearing from a diverse set of individuals and perspectives, a parallel tailored strategy to work with the Spanish-speaking communities in Sonoma Valley culminated in an in-person town hall facilitated 100% in Spanish. Staff facilitated the town hall in partnership with Supervisorial District 1 staff and local faith-based community leaders.

Tailored Community Engagement Strategy

Recognizing the need to address a digital divide earlier in the planning process, the County invested additional staff as well as hiring Consensus Building Institute to support staff efforts in developing a tailored engagement strategy to supplement its ongoing virtual engagement. The tailored engagement continues to focus on outreach with a number of communities that County staff has identified as critical missing voices in the planning process to date.

1. *Latinx community in Sonoma Valley*

In coordination with Supervisorial District 1 staff, Permit Sonoma identified a number of community leaders and meetings to provide project information and to hear about community interests for the site. The strategy included a virtual engagement component and concluded with an in-person town hall facilitated 100% in Spanish on November 16, 2021.

2. *Young people*

In coordination with Supervisorial District 1 staff, Permit Sonoma has met with leaders in Sonoma Valley education to have a focused discussion on site opportunities. Additionally, staff incorporated new, child-friendly ways such as coloring pages to engage with families and generate diverse interest from the community. Furthermore, staff will continue to work with Sonoma Valley school staff in expanding its communication to local families about the project.

3. *Ambassadors*

Given the various ways people get information during this time, staff developed an Ambassadors Toolkit that contains basic project information and materials in an effort for the community to have informed discussions about the redevelopment of the site.

Draft Project Description Framework

Based on community and project team input to date, the following is a proposed project framework identifying key elements being evaluated for the project description.

Open Space Conservation

1. Permanent preservation of approximately 750 acres as open space
2. Expansion of the existing wildlife corridor and additional policies and programs in the Specific Plan recognizes the area as critical wildlife habitat and ecological function
3. An expansion of the riparian corridor for both creeks
4. Regeneration of the historic ecological and agricultural uses to the east
 - a. Wetland restoration to double as a wildfire fuel break
 - b. Agricultural uses such as farming and small livestock
5. Fire resilience

- a. Minimum 100 feet of defensible space around housing
- b. Minimum 200 feet of vegetation management

Development program of existing 180-acre core campus

1. Reduction of existing campus footprint to expand wildlife and creek buffers
2. No new net building area (currently 1.7 million square feet of existing building area)
3. New vehicle connection between Arnold Dr. and Hwy 12

Housing

1. Approximately 900-1,000 housing units with focus on [Missing Middle Housing](https://missingmiddlehousing.com/) (link provided), which is a range of multi-unit housing that is compatible in scale and form with single-family homes located in a walkable neighborhood (e.g. duplex, cottage, townhouse, live/work)

Non-housing

1. Approximately 1,000 new jobs created from new local-serving retail, office and visitor-serving uses
2. Community facilities
 - a. Fire Station
 - b. Youth Center
 - c. Active recreational space including the existing ballfields (at least 5 acres)
3. Historic preservation of both landmarks: the Main Building and Sonoma House to be redeveloped as destinations for both locals and visitors while preserving the site's legacy of care
4. Creation of a memorial site to complement the existing Eldridge Cemetery

Based on the Board of Supervisor and community discussion, staff will refine a project description and evaluate it as part of the project's draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The information gathered from the discussions will also help inform the alternatives to be considered in the draft EIR. Concurrently, the County planning team will be working with the community to incorporate the Vision and Guiding Principles into policies and programs for the draft Specific Plan. Staff will publish both a draft EIR and Specific Plan for public review in June 2022.

The Planning Commission will hold two public hearings: (1) to receive public comment on the draft EIR in July 2022 and (2) to potentially adopt a resolution in August 2022 recommending that the Board of Supervisors consider certifying a final EIR and adopt a final Specific Plan. Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors may consider certifying a final EIR and adopting a final Specific Plan in September 2022.

As the project moves into the next stage of the planning and disposition process, Permit Sonoma continue to refine its approach to ensure an inclusive planning process. To that effect, Permit Sonoma has expanded its planning team to include consultants with expertise in (1) economic and disposition strategy and (2) community engagement and facilitation. These investments expand the County's commitment to the community and to the State in its planning process. With these additional resources, the County is on track to meet the project schedule and its commitment to the State for an integrated process to complete both planning and disposition of the property by the end of 2022.

Policy Priority Discussion

In order to inform the proposed project framework above and the project description to be drafted following this Board of Supervisors meeting, staff specifically seeks comments from the Board on the following policy issues:

Housing Affordability

The draft project description framework proposes 25% of the housing units to be deed restricted as affordable housing, which go beyond the County's inclusionary housing requirements on rental units (10-15% of the units) and ownership units (20% of the units). The project's feasibility analysis assumes that the costs to build the additional units beyond the minimum County requirement would need to be identified, typically achieved through public subsidies. In order to address identified project constraints (e.g. State legislative priorities for the site, infrastructure and rehabilitation costs, market demand and feasibility, community compatibility, and potential environmental impacts), additional financing or a reduction in redevelopment costs such as less historic preservation of buildings would be required to support an increase in affordable housing units. The Board may consider adding such a request to its County Legislative Platform.

Wildlife Corridor

The draft project description framework proposes permanent preservation of 750 acres of critical wildlife and natural habitat. Furthermore, the project also addresses a major section of the east-west wildlife corridor just south of Lake Suttonfield by expanding the existing wildlife corridor between the core campus and reservoir. Furthermore, developing a set of draft policies and programs for the Specific Plan is a priority focus in working with the community on this issue. The Board may consider directing staff to explore additional protection measures for the wildlife corridor.

Visitor-serving Uses

The draft project framework includes an approximately 100-unit hotel as a way to finance redevelopment of the Main Building, which is the one historic landmark on campus, and estimated to require \$15-\$30 million in rehabilitation costs. While the market demand and economic analysis supports such a use in the region, the Board may consider directing staff to explore alternative land uses that could support the rehabilitation of the two historic landmarks without a hotel.

Mobility

The draft project framework proposes a new vehicular connection to Highway 12 from the east end of the campus. The Board may consider directing staff to look at an alternative to this by analyzing the road as vehicular access during emergencies and evacuations only. The construction of both proposals are unfunded and not assumed as part of the economic feasibility.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

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amount of \$1,475,949.

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

No fiscal impacts to the department or the general fund. Planning and staffing to complete the Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan is fully funded with a \$3.5 million State grant, awarded on December 17, 2019.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- Att 1 State Legislation
- Att 2 Vision and Guiding Principles
- Att 3 Project FAQ
- Att 4 Tailored Community Engagement Strategy, September 2021
- Att 5 Project Description Exhibits
- Att 6 Public Comments

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

- Item 2019-1544: Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan State Agreement and Planning Services Contract
- Item 2020-1084: Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan- Update