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Sonoma Valley Next 100 Files Lawsuit Challenging California's Department of General Services' Plans for Development of Historic Sonoma Developmental Center Site

Sonoma, CA – On January 14, the nonprofit organization *Sonoma Valley Next 100* filed a lawsuit against the California Department of General Services (DGS) in Sonoma County Superior Court, challenging the state's plans to allow large-scale, unfettered development of the former Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property. The lawsuit seeks declaratory relief and a writ of traditional mandamus to prevent DGS from transferring the site to the developers selected by the state—Eldridge Renewal, LLC, Rogal & Partners, and the Grupe Company.

Norman Gilroy, a founding member of *Sonoma Valley Next 100*, described the lawsuit as “a strong community pushback against the State's unconscionable and unsustainable development plans for SDC.” He noted that the suit follows the successful challenge by *SCALE* (Sonoma County Advocates for a Livable Environment) against the County's Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which were invalidated by the Sonoma County Superior Court in October 2024. In response, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors rescinded its project approvals for the SDC site in December 2024.

The new legal action contends that DGS's development plans violate the 2019 Enabling Legislation, which provides clear guidelines for development at the SDC site, and California's Public Trust Doctrine and historic preservation laws. The plaintiffs claim that the state's proposed plans fail to adequately prioritize affordable housing, which is one of the central goals of the Enabling Legislation, and includes a disproportionately high percentage of market-rate housing, contributing to the region's housing crisis without addressing the critical need for affordable homes.

The lawsuit also raises significant concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed development, particularly with respect to the SDC site's natural resources. The site contains a critical wildlife corridor and riparian zones along Sonoma Creek, which is habitat to listed salmon species. Plaintiffs argue that the development plans place these sensitive resources at risk by causing extensive environmental damage and positioning construction too close to the creek, contrary to both the Enabling Legislation and the Public Trust Doctrine.

Another key point of contention is the destruction of the site's historical buildings and landscape. The plaintiffs assert that DGS's plans to demolish 90% of the historic structures and landscaping within the SDC's designated Historic District would violate state historic preservation requirements, damaging the site's cultural significance.

The lawsuit also accuses DGS of failing to give due consideration to proposals submitted by local community groups and nonprofit organizations. These proposals reflected years of community input and prioritized preserving the historic, environmental, and community values of the SDC site. Instead, DGS's decision to proceed with a developer focused primarily on profitability has raised the ire of local residents.

While supporting CalFire and its work, the plaintiffs also challenge the proposed location of a new CalFire Regional Headquarters on 52 acres of the SDC site set aside for open space and includes wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas. The lawsuit claims placing a major new facility in this location violates both the Enabling Legislation and other applicable legal protections.

The plaintiffs are seeking relief that would set aside DGS's decision to select Eldridge Renewal, LLC's development proposal and demand a more balanced, lawful approach to the reuse and development of the SDC site—one that respects the historical, environmental, and community values that make the SDC site so unique.

About Sonoma Valley Next 100 *Sonoma Valley Next 100* is a nonprofit organization committed to preserving the natural, cultural, and historical resources of Sonoma Valley while advocating for sustainable and community-centered development. The group works to protect local environmental and historical landmarks and engage in efforts that promote responsible, equitable land use.

For additional information, please contact: 707-656-5988. **The full complaint is available [HERE](#)**