

## 2 companies picked to redevelop campus

### State names pair behind Napa, Stockton mixed-use projects

#### GLEN ELLEN » SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER SITE

By

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SONOMA INDEX-TRIBUNE

After four months of quiet deliberations, the California Department of General Services named The Grupe Company and Rogal & Partners on Monday as the development team picked to lead the \$100 million redevelopment project at the former Sonoma Developmental Center in Eldridge.

The deal calls for the two companies to buy a 180-acre portion of the 945-acre property “as is,” and follow the redevelopment plans spelled out in the SDC Site Specific Plan that the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved in December. The developers will be responsible for bringing to life an ambitious vision to address housing and job diversity in Sonoma Valley.

“After a long, careful review of the County’s Specific Plan, the proposals themselves, and interviews/Q& A, we have selected a group that is most in keeping with the County’s plan for the site and has a track record of successfully delivering projects like this,” Jennifer Iida, public information officer for the state’s Department of General Services, said in an email.

Rogal & Partners is owned by Napa resident Keith Rogal, founder of Rogal Projects, which created the Carneros Resort and Spa in Napa and is a managing partner of the Napa Pipe mixed-use development project.

The Carneros Resort and Inn, on Sonoma Highway between Schellville and downtown Napa, offers rooms that average \$1,000 per night. In 2005, Rogal sold the inn to the PlumpJack Group, which was founded and led by Gov. Gavin Newsom, who was the mayor of San Francisco at the time.

Rogal & Partners is building the Napa Pipe project on a 157-acre former industrial site along the Napa River. The project includes more than 3,000 housing units around a town center with restaurants and retail shops.

The Grupe Project has built more than a dozen developments with 1,000 or more housing units, mostly located in Stockton but also in Sacramento and other Northern California cities. The projects have included a mix of affordable housing, single- family homes and multifamily housing.

“Permit Sonoma is excited the state has chosen a purchaser,” Permit Sonoma Director Tennis Wick told the Sonoma Index- Tribune.

“We are ready to implement the state statute and the specific plan’s vision for open space protection, affordable housing — including homes for those with developmental disabilities, and economic development that will benefit Sonoma Valley’s future.”

The plan at SDC approved by the supervisors calls for a mixed-used development of approximately 620 housing units, as well as commercial shops, a potential climate research center and a boutique hotel. Plans call for 900 new jobs. Around 700 acres of the historic property will be preserved as open space, including a 100-foot setback along Sonoma Creek.

option that called for no more than 450 housing units. In February, two community groups filed a lawsuit against the county that challenges the environmental impact report, calling the project “a shortsighted plan with serious environmental consequences.”

The deal marked the first time California has allowed a county to take the lead in developing a financially feasible proposal on state-owned land. Developers will be bound by the requirements of the specific plan.

“We’re deeply grateful for the state’s work on this and for naming a developer for this vital site in the heart of Sonoma Valley,” said Supervisor Susan Gorin.

First opened in 1891, at its height Sonoma Developmental Center served as the largest employer in Sonoma Valley with over 1,300 staff members caring for more than 3,700 clients. Following years of declining population and increasingly expensive deferred maintenance on site, the state closed the facility in 2018.

But the rejuvenation of the campus is still some time away. Sonoma County and the team of developers must formalize a development plan for the project detailing the conditions and obligations during construction, according to the state’s Department of General Services. The department will also plan for the transfer of 700-plus acres of open space to the Department of Parks and Recreation as part of the state budget process, Iida said.

“We look forward to helping ensure the developer provides numerous opportunities to outreach and hear from the community to develop a project that reflects the qualities of Sonoma Valley while addressing the needs within the guidelines of the SDC specific plan,” Gorin said. *Press Democrat Staff Writer Phil Barber contributed to this report.*



**Above, the grounds of the former Sonoma Developmental Center in Eldridge. The state has selected two companies to lead the \$100 million redevelopment project, which will include housing, shops and a hotel, on a 180-acre portion of the 945-acre property.**  
ROBBI PENGELLY / SONOMA INDEX-TRIBUNE

Although supported by housing advocates, the redevelopment project has mostly been unpopular with Glen Ellen residents, who sought a scaled-back

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