

**MEMO**

**Date:** August 31, 2022  
**ITEM:** Item 1; September 6 2022 at 3:00 p.m.  
**From:** Brian Oh, Comprehensive Planning Manager  
**Subject:** Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan  
Applicant: County of Sonoma  
Owner: State of California  
15000 Arnold Dr., Eldridge, CA  
APN: 054-090-001

**Project Proposal**

The County of Sonoma has released a draft Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report for a 45-day public review of its draft Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan that includes redevelopment of the core campus. The draft Plan proposes historic preservation goals and policies to guide the redevelopment expected to occur over the next twenty years. The County seeks input from the Landmarks Commission on its draft plan for redevelopment and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

**Staff's Recommendation:**

- Receive an informational presentation of the draft Specific Plan policies
- Provide comments to staff on policies to consider

**Analysis:**Background:

Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) – previously known as the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children (1885-1908), Sonoma State Home (1909-1952), and Sonoma State Hospital (1953-1985) – was established in 1889 to support the state's first public institution for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Located today on approximately 900 acres in Sonoma County, the complex consists of more than 200 buildings and structures that are considered to be of historic age, i.e., built in 1967 or earlier.

Prior work commissioned by the State Department of General Services in 2019 identified three resources of historic significance:

- the extant administrative wing of the original main hospital building (the Main Building)
  - National Register of Historic Places:
- Sonoma House - Residence 140 (the Sonoma House)



- Sonoma County Landmark
- Sonoma State Home Historic District (SSHHD)
  - State Register of Historic Resources

Alterations to any Sonoma County Landmark should follow the guidelines delineated by the County Landmarks Commission that are based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

**Setting:**

The Sonoma Developmental Center is an approximately 945-acre former state institution for people with developmental disabilities located in the Sonoma Valley of southern Sonoma County, about six miles north of the City of Sonoma and about 15 miles south of Santa Rosa, near the unincorporated community of Glen Ellen. The core campus is approximately 180 acres.

**Draft Goals and Policies related to Preservation of Historic Resources**

**Goals**

1. **Diverse Mix of Land Uses:** Promote a diverse and integrated mix of residential development and employment uses, including research, creative services, education, office, retail, and small businesses, to create a vibrant, walkable community hub that provides economic and cultural opportunities for Sonoma Valley communities.
2. **Economic Feasibility:** Allow for adequate flexibility and intensity of land uses such that long-term development of the site can be accomplished incrementally and result in an economically feasible, self-supporting district that adapts and evolves with changing market conditions.
3. **Balanced Development:** Prioritize residential uses as both an economic engine and catalyst for activity on the site, while balancing in non-residential uses incorporate uses supportive of the County’s workforce and economic development needs, community and institutional uses, and neighborhood-commercial uses to promote walkable lifestyles.
4. **Preserve the historic character of the SDC campus** through the preservation and reuse of the National Register- eligible Sonoma House and the National Register-listed Main Building, key historic landscape elements, and of a portion of the contributing buildings to the National Register-listed Sonoma State Home Historic District, while balancing conservation with development and contemporary land use and development feasibility objectives.



5. Select historic buildings for conservation to maximize their presence along streets and public places.
6. Provide flexibility in design for conservation when conservation of an entire building is not feasible in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for rehabilitation.
7. Provide opportunities for historic interpretation onsite.

### **Policies**

1. Preserve and reuse the two historically significant buildings, the Main Building (PEC) and the Sonoma House Complex, including its six support structures. (Policy 4-20)
2. Preserve and enhance the landscape elements that contribute to the significance and character of the Sonoma State Home Historic District, including the formal tree grid at the Central Green, the baseball field, Sonoma Bridge, the front entrance gate, and the Eldridge Cemetery, as well as primary circulation routes. All non-functional turf areas where no recreational purpose is provided and existing should be eliminated and replaced with drought-tolerant planting or ground cover that enhances the historic landscape. (Policy 4-21)
3. Require that the project sponsor prepare a historic preservation plan, based on desired development and suitability of buildings for adaptive reuse, with the overarching objective of preserving a set of buildings that reflect the diversity of building types and the continuum of life at the former SDC. For instance, retain and reuse buildings that represent various architectural styles that are character-defining to the Historic District, including French Eclectic, Spanish Eclectic, and Tudor Revival, as well as character-defining materials such as tile roofs, stucco and brick cladding, and wood windows. (Policy 4-22)
4. Preserve and reuse houses along Arnold Drive within the core campus, reconstructing as necessary. Require that the developer hire a preservation architect to undertake a conditions assessment and reconstruction plan prior to demolishing and reconstructing houses on Arnold Drive that are in poor condition. Reconstruction should adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction. (Policy 4-27)
5. Ensure that proper documentation is made prior to any substantial change to or demolition of a contributing historic structure, as described in Appendix A. (Policy 4-29)

6. For any contributing historic structures that are demolished within the Planning Area, require that materials be made available as salvage as described in Appendix A, in order to facilitate the reuse of materials and historic detailing, and to reduce demolition waste. (Policy 4-30)
7. Require that construction contractor(s) use all feasible means to avoid damage to adjacent and nearby historic buildings, as described in Appendix A. (Policy 4-31)

Note: Policies 4-23 to 26 in Attachment 1.

Attachment(s)

1. Figure 4.3-1: Historic Assets and Draft Preservation Policies (SDC Draft Specific Plan, August 2022)

