

1. INTRODUCTION





1.1 Project Overview

Sonoma Developmental Center, or SDC, is a State-run residential care facility in the Sonoma Valley that has been serving patients with severe developmental disabilities for over 120 years. In addition to serving a vulnerable resident population, SDC has been a significant employer in Sonoma County. The site is a recreational and scenic resource for community members and visitors, and a place rich in history and ecological value.

The California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) provides services to persons with developmental disabilities, through three developmental centers (including SDC) and a network of some 21 private non-profit organizations that provide community-based care. In 2015, the State made the decision to close California's remaining developmental centers. Broadly, the aim of these closures is to comply with California's Lanterman Act and with federal regulatory standards for reimbursement of health care costs. DDS, in consultation with community members and stakeholders, completed a Closure Plan for SDC, describing how the transition of residents to appropriate living arrangements would take place by the end of 2018. The Department of General Services (DGS), as the State's real estate asset manager, is responsible for managing the transition of the SDC site for future use.

The closure of SDC and transition to its next use will not follow a typical surplus property disposition process. Rather, the State has committed to working closely with stakeholders and community members to ensure that property reuse responds to and balances the priorities of community members, Sonoma County, and the State.

This Existing Conditions Assessment has been carried out by a team of planners, architects, civil engineers, historians, ecologists, hydrological engineers, cultural resource specialists and others, collectively Consultants or Consultant Team, on behalf of the State of California. It presents findings of an in-depth technical evaluation of the Sonoma Developmental Center site in this Existing Conditions Assessment, and Considerations for Reuse and Conservation, which is intended to inform a Master Land Use and Facilities Reuse Plan.

This Existing Conditions Assessment builds on valuable work conducted in 2015 by a community-based group, Transform SDC, and recent environmental and historical studies.

1.2 SDC and Its Site

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTION

Sonoma Developmental Center originated in 1884 as a small private school for developmentally disabled children in Vallejo. Its founders, Frances H. Bentley and Julia M. Judah, were both mothers of children with developmental disabilities. The school moved to Santa Clara, soon became public, and after a short period, was relocated to its current site in Sonoma County after the State purchased the land in 1889 from William McPherson Hill for \$50,000.

In its first decades, what is now SDC functioned largely as a custodial institution, providing relatively little medical therapy but offering structure, practical duties and schooling. The home's purpose shifted significantly as juvenile courts and schools began identifying large numbers of "defective delinquents" to be housed at the Sonoma campus. The hospital's surgeon, Fred O. Butler, instituted an aggressive sterilization program beginning in 1918. Most surviving west campus buildings date to the two decades of rapid expansion during this time.

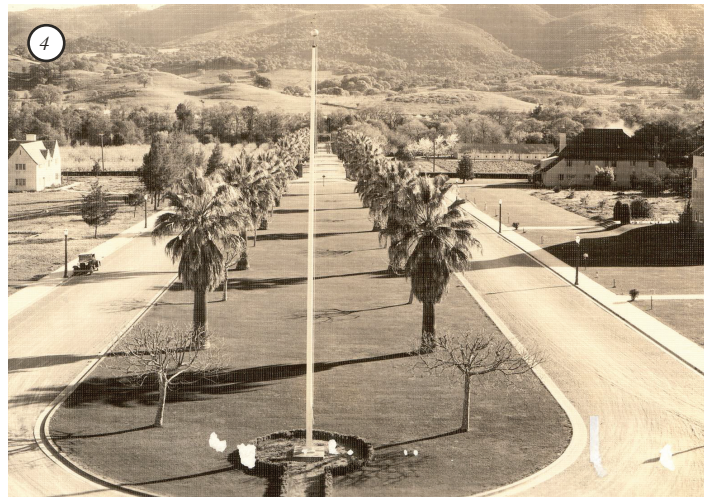
The Sonoma State Home / Hospital, as it was called at the time, experienced considerable growth following World War II. The campus spread east across Arnold Drive and Sonoma Creek, where 18 new wards and a major hospital addition were built. The program became more medically oriented, and the new buildings had many of the features of modern hospitals. The educational program expanded in 1961 with the construction of a new school wing, reinforcing the modern orientation of the institution. A vocational program, Sunrise Industries, also started around this time.

Growth slowed and then reversed in the 1960s owing to a national trend towards deinstitutionalization in favor of community care. One new hospital building was constructed in 1967, but gradually the institution shifted to repurposing or shuttering of older buildings. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several hundred acres were deemed to be surplus land, and some was transferred to Jack London State Park in 2008.

A more detailed history is provided in Chapter 6.

- ① *SDC site before 1889*
- ② *1894 SDC Library*
- ③ *1916 SDC Library*
- ④ *Main entrance, circa 1931*
- ⑤ *Former Judah Hall, removed in 1955.*
- ⑥ *Frederickson Receiving Center, 1962.*

Source: Sonoma Developmental Center Library.



SITE ORIENTATION

SDC covers some 945 acres adjacent to the community of Glen Ellen in Sonoma County. The site is located six and a half road miles from the plaza in Sonoma, and 15 miles from downtown Santa Rosa, in the picturesque, predominantly rural Sonoma Valley. The site is bisected by Arnold Drive and Sonoma Creek. To the west, the site stretches up out of the creek valley towards Sonoma Mountain; to the east, it rises in rolling terrain toward Highway 12. The western portion of the SDC site is framed by Asbury and Hill creeks, which generally flow along the northern and southern property boundaries respectively. Jack London State Historic Park borders the site to the west, and surrounds Camp Via, a small, non-contiguous part of the SDC site. East of Sonoma Creek, the SDC site is bordered by Sonoma Valley Regional Park to the north and vineyards and conserved

agricultural land to the south. The site includes two reservoirs, Fern Lake in the western uplands and Suttonfield Lake on the east side. Altogether the campus includes some 292 buildings or other structures, most of which are concentrated in the core campus area.

SDC's core campus area comprises about 150 acres or 16 percent of the site, between Eucalyptus Street and Railroad Street in the level or gently sloping valley floor. Tree-lined Arnold Drive bisects the core area and connects SDC to the larger Sonoma Valley. West of Arnold Drive, the core campus area features buildings and landscaped spaces from SDC's inception through the 1940s, including distinct areas that have served as client residences, staff housing, medical and educational buildings, and as administrative and maintenance support facilities. Later institutional development is concentrated

east of Arnold Drive, on both sides of Sonoma Creek. Most of these buildings were designed as treatment wards, and follow one of a small number of repeating plans. This area also includes the Nelson Treatment Center; whose distinctive roofline is highly visible from Arnold Drive at the site's southern border.

To the west, Orchard Road rises toward Sonoma Mountain, passing the cemetery, Water Treatment Plant, and Fern Lake, before reaching Camp Via. East of the core area, the site includes the landscape complex, remnants of an old sewage treatment plant, and a sprawling farm complex including pastures, paddocks, and various farm buildings including poultry, dairy, and hog barns, and farm houses. Many of these buildings – particularly those to the east of the pasture lands – were destroyed in the North Bay fires in the fall of 2017.

A NOTE ON NAMES

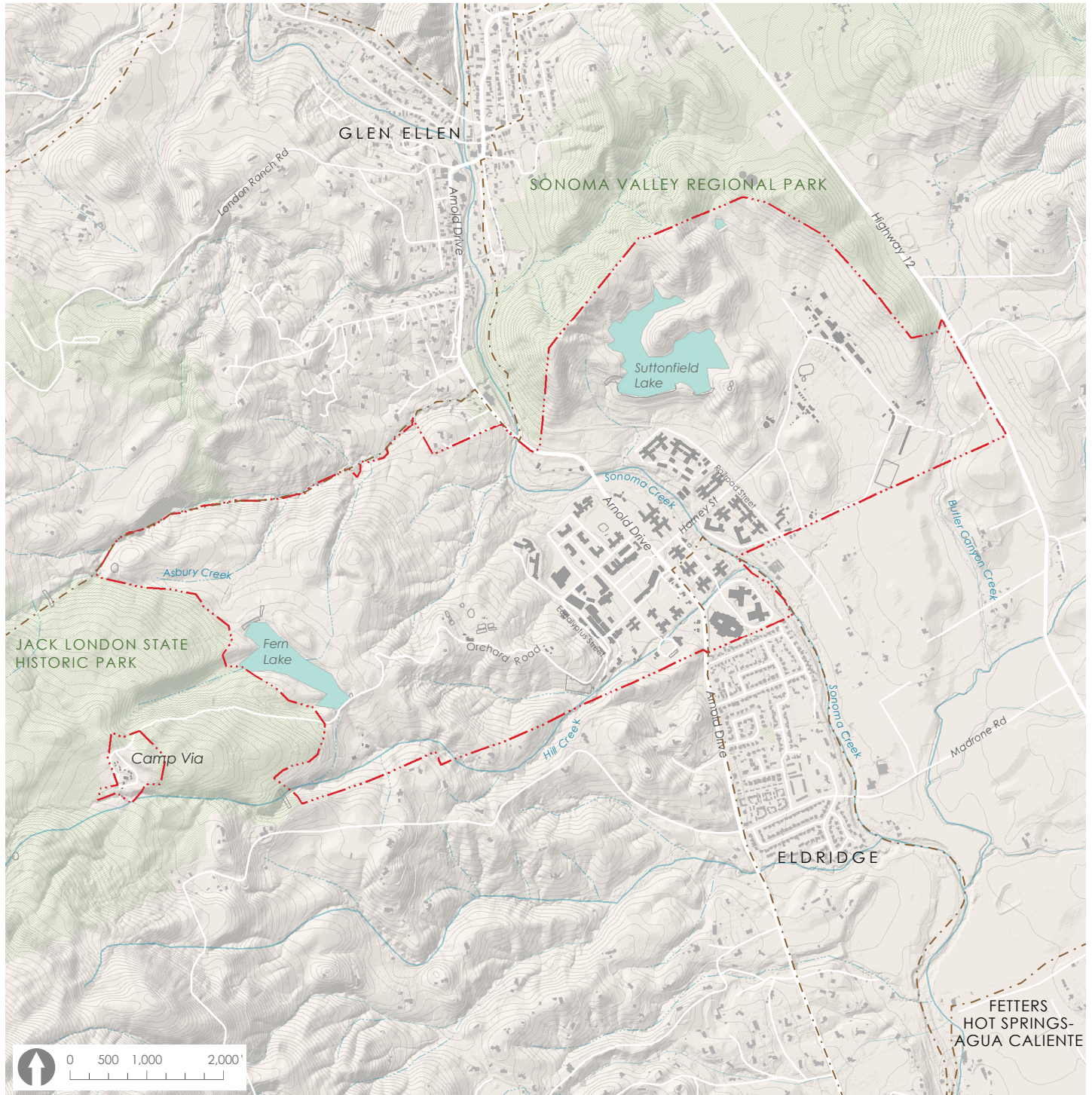
The Sonoma Developmental Center site was given the name Eldridge, and the post office on the campus bears that name today. The US Census Bureau identifies Eldridge as a Census-designated Place encompassing part of the SDC campus as well as the predominantly residential neighborhood to the south (see Figure 1-1). However, the name is often associated only with the SDC site itself.

This report uses the name Hill Creek for the creek that forms the southern boundary of the SDC site. While the USGS Geographic Names index identifies this stream as Mill Creek, it is named Hill Creek in several primary references consulted for

the biological resources analysis. In particular, The Watershed Sanitary Survey by Barber, Birkas and Dwyer provides some of the most extensive and thorough history of the area and descriptions of the watersheds. According to this report, “William Hill settled the lands that have become the SDC by cattle ranching and establishing vineyards and fruit orchards.”

Finally, we are calling the lake in the eastern part of the property “Suttonfield Lake.” This is consistent with how the reservoir is depicted on current US Geological Society (USGS) maps. However, it is worth noting that the lake was named after W.T. Suttentfield, and that it is listed as “Suttentfield Reservoir Dam” on the water permit.

Figure 1-1
THE SDC SITE



Note: The SDC site boundary used in this report was provided by Sonoma Land Trust and Prunuske Chatham, Inc. The boundary is based on the survey completed in 2001 by Lescure Engineers, and modified to account for subsequent land transfers to State and County Parks.

Source
 USGS, GreenInfo Network,
 Sonoma Ecology Center

1.3 Learning from the Community

This process sought to take into consideration community work that preceded it. Equally important was to engage stakeholders in a consensus-seeking, robust exploration of the potential for future uses, which can be evaluated in follow-on studies with an understanding of the site's unique qualities, technical constraints, the community's vision and values, and the interests of all affected parties.

TRANSFORM SDC

Transform SDC formed as a group of stakeholders and engaged community members interested in helping to guide site reuse in a way that would “integrate community values, sustainability, and economic viability to achieve a higher purpose.” Its 2016 report, *Sonoma Developmental Center: Site Transformation Study*, evaluates potential models for future site governance, and identifies priorities for future use. This work has and will continue to inform the process underway.

STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing communication between community members, stakeholders, and the planning team is a key part of the SDC Conceptual Master Land Use and Facilities Reuse Plan Alternatives Study¹. Consultants met with stakeholders one-on-one and in small groups during the summer of 2017, gaining valuable understanding of site conditions, interested organizations, and priorities and concerns.

Two Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, in September 2017 and March 2018, anchored the first phase of the effort. At each meeting, the Consultant Team reported on community input and on findings from the technical analysis. Stakeholders posed questions to the Consultant Team and to representatives of State agencies, and participated in small-group discussions. Each workshop was organized around a set of critical components of our analysis. At the first CAC meeting, the Consultant team presented its assessment of the site's hydrological and ecological characteristics; historical development; methodology

for evaluating building condition; infrastructure assessment; and economic context. Participants explored what those findings meant for the site's future. At the second meeting, the Consultant Team addressed the effects of the October 2017 Nuns Fire, and presented the assessment of building conditions; estimated costs to rehabilitate buildings and infrastructure; transportation context; economic considerations of site transition to a new use; and examples of other, similar site transformation projects. The Team presented a preliminary analysis of “opportunities and constraints” based on all of this analysis. In a breakout session, CAC members provided feedback on those opportunities and constraints, and on a draft set of “guiding principles” for site reuse.

A community workshop was held in June 2018 for members of the public at large to learn about the process and the findings of the existing conditions analysis, and to provide feedback on the analysis and priorities for the future of the SDC site. Key themes from each of these engagement efforts are summarized in Chapter 3.

¹ This Existing Conditions Assessment is the culmination of the Site Assessment which is the first phase of this broader study. As of this writing, no additional phases are contracted beyond the Site Assessment phase.



Two Community Advisory Committee meetings anchored the process.

1.4 Areas of Analysis

In order to realize the potential of the SDC site in a sensitive and responsive way, the site's complex interaction of ecology and human use, its natural resources and potential hazards, and the condition of its buildings and infrastructure all need to be understood. It is also important to gain a good understanding of potential future operations and governance structures, market potential and financial feasibility.

The Consultant Team, including specialists from a broad range of disciplines, sought to address the following issues and questions:

- What is the regional context of the SDC site, including its land use patterns, circulation patterns, natural and open space systems, landscape characteristics, and demographics?
- What is the character of the site itself—its topography, unique natural resources, built form, historic and cultural resources, viewsheds, and suitability for different uses?
- What is the condition of buildings and infrastructure on the site, and what opportunities and constraints does it pose to potential reuse?
- How is the site served by different modes of transportation? What is the capacity of the circulation network to accommodate change?
- What economic trends and market conditions may affect future reuse of the site, and what potential does the site have for public, private, institutional, open space, and other land uses?
- What governance models could be used to repurpose or manage the SDC site in the future?
- What hydrological resources and infrastructure exist on the SDC site?
- What ecological, natural, agricultural, and recreational resources are present?
- What seismic, geological, and flooding hazards exist at SDC, and how can they be mitigated?
- What are the opportunities and constraints that will create the framework for a successful transition?

The large and diverse Consultant Team was organized into four “pillars,” so that specialists covering related topics could maintain good communication and share insights. A diagram illustrating these four pillars is provided here; see Figure 1-2.

Our analysis involved site visits, meetings with facilities and operations staff, meetings with stakeholders, research and internal discussions. The findings are documented in this report.

Figure 1-2

PRIMARY AREAS OF STUDY (“PILLARS”) AND ASSOCIATED EXPERT TEAMS & SPECIALISTS



1.5 How to Use this Report

The Existing Conditions Assessment has been prepared for the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of General Services, and is intended to help guide the State's approach to transitioning the Sonoma Developmental Center site. It is also meant as a comprehensive resource for community members and stakeholders.

The Report is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter orients readers to the SDC site, the reason for studying it, and what is covered in the report.

Chapter 2: Executive Summary. Chapter 2 seeks to "tell the story" of the SDC site briefly and holistically, identifying the theme of each of the chapters that follow (4-8) and suggesting how these strands are intertwined.

Chapter 3: Community Voice. Chapter 3 presents the key themes identified by stakeholders and community members, and a resulting set of guiding principles that seek to capture both State and stakeholder priorities.

Chapter 4: Land + Water. Chapter 4 describes the physical geography of the region, the geological and seismic hazards, slopes, and soil types and characteristics of the site. It describes the site's natural hydrology and its water system.

Chapter 5: Ecology. Chapter 5 presents the biodiversity of the region within which the SDC site is located, and the distinct

plant communities, ecosystems, and wildlife corridors on and around the site. It also covers the way people use the natural environment, including for recreation.

Chapter 6: History + Experience of Place. Chapter 6 paints a picture of the Sonoma Valley as a cultural landscape, and walks through the history of the site and the cultural and historic resources present there. The chapter concludes with a description of the how the site is experienced today.

Chapter 7: Buildings + Infrastructure. Chapter 7 begins with a discussion of the regional transportation context and local access conditions at the site, and drills down to cover the physical conditions of infrastructure systems and buildings on the site. Order of Magnitude cost estimates for rehabilitating infrastructure and buildings are presented.

Chapter 8: Economy + Land Use. Chapter 8 introduces the regional economic context and trends that shape the market. It identifies potential opportunities for reuse and redevelopment, and explores several case studies of similar sites. The chapter ends with a discussion of factors that will influence development opportunities and should guide the transition strategy.

Chapter 9: Considerations for Reuse and Conservation. The last chapter seeks to distill and synthesize the wide-ranging analysis to identify the critical constraints and opportunities for future use.

The Existing Conditions Assessment

compiles and summarizes more detailed, technical information from a variety of source reports. Several of these reports are included here as appendices, as follows:

- Appendix A: Preliminary Geologic Hazard Report, Sonoma Developmental Center. PJC & Associates, October 2017.
- Appendix B: Sonoma Developmental Center Existing Conditions Assessment: Hydrology and Site Infrastructure (DRAFT). Sherwood Design Engineers, January 2018.
- Appendix C: Sonoma Developmental Center Existing Conditions Assessment: Natural and Recreational Resources (DRAFT). Prunuske Chatham, Inc., December 2017.
- Appendix D: Draft Report of Limited Environmental Phase II Investigation. EBA Engineering, September 2017.
- Appendix E: Sonoma Developmental Center Mobility Assessment: Existing Conditions. Nelson\Nygaard, May 2018.
- Appendix F: Building Assessment Report: Sonoma Developmental Center. Interface Engineering, November 2017.
- Appendix G: Structural Condition Assessments. DCI, 2017.
- Appendix H: Building Hazardous Materials Clarification, Sonoma Developmental Center. VBA, Inc., October 2017.

Where citations occur in the Existing Conditions Assessment, these refer to sources detailed in the underlying technical reports. Therefore, those reports should be consulted for references.

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