



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETING

### Program Environmental Impact Report Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan

**Date:** February 08, 2022

**To:** Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

**Project Title:** Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan

**Comment Period:** Friday, March 25 by 05:00PM PST

**Scoping Meeting:** VIRTUAL, Thursday, February 17 at 05:30 PM PST

**Lead Agency:** County of Sonoma

**Contact:** Brian Oh, Comprehensive Planning Manager  
Permit Sonoma  
County of Sonoma  
2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
[Brian.Oh@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Brian.Oh@sonoma-county.org)  
Direct: (707) 565-1931

The County of Sonoma is preparing the Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan, which is a specific plan governing the approximately 945 acre property (SDC Property) that includes the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) core campus, known as the proposed Project (Project). The County has determined that the Project requires the preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR or EIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CEQA Guidelines). The County has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(a) and 15375.

This NOP solicits guidance from responsible, trustee, and federal agencies about the scope and content of environmental information to be included in the EIR related to the agencies' statutory responsibilities. The agencies will use the County's EIR when considering their permits or other approvals related to the Project. The NOP also provides an opportunity for other interested parties to provide the County information they may possess or comments on environmental issues they see as being germane to the EIR.

The Project description, location, and topics of probable environmental effects that will be analyzed in the Program EIR are contained in the pages that follow. Since the County has determined that a Program EIR is required for the Project, pursuant to Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, preparation of an Initial Study is not required and, therefore, one has not been prepared. Due to time limits mandated by state law, you are encouraged to submit

your response to this NOP at the earliest possible date. Comments must be received no later than the close of the NOP comment period on Friday, March 25 by 05:00PM PST, as stated on the first page of this NOP. Written comments should be addressed to Brian Oh at the address listed above.

## **PROJECT SETTING**

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Established in 1891 in the heart of the Sonoma Valley, the SDC is the oldest facility in California created specifically to serve the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, and was sited at its current location for its picturesque, therapeutic setting, gaining national renown as a place of healing and community. In 2018, the State of California officially closed the facility, and relocated clients to smaller, community-based care facilities. Figure 1 shows the project boundaries within the regional context.

Through an agreement signed in 2019, the State of California and Sonoma County forged a unique partnership that allows the County to prepare a Specific Plan and related environmental review for future reuse of the property. The State of California owns the entire property and continues to control and operate the property as the Specific Plan process is underway.

The Planning Area includes all SDC property, encompassing approximately 945 acres, or about 1.5 square miles, which includes a developed core campus covering approximately 180 acres, the surrounding approximately 755 acres of contiguous open space, and the 11-acre non-contiguous Camp Via grounds within Jack London State Historic Park. Open space includes former agricultural land, recreational uses, the Eldridge Cemetery, and many acres of valuable wildlife habitat. Embedded in the open space is an existing network of trails and access roads as well as a water system consisting of two reservoirs, aqueducts, spring head, storage tanks, treatment plant, pipelines and a water intake in Sonoma Creek. Figure 2 shows the Planning Area boundaries.

The core campus contains approximately 1.7 million square feet within 180 buildings constructed at various times, and includes two buildings on or eligible to be on the National Register – the Main Building and the Sonoma House. Several other buildings and landscape elements are contributing resources to the Sonoma State Home Historic District. Today, most of the buildings in the campus are vacant. More information on project setting is available in the Profile and Background Report (September 2020) available at the project website <https://www.sdcspecificplan.com/documents>.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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The purpose of the SDC Specific Plan is to guide development of the SDC core campus and preserve open space and natural resources on the SDC property. The State of California enacted Government Code Section 14670.10.5 that outlines the State’s goals and objectives for the SDC Specific Plan and disposition of the property. In light of the statewide affordable housing crisis, State law stipulates that the SDC Specific Plan prioritize housing, especially

affordable housing and housing for individuals with developmental disabilities, and stipulates that the open space surrounding the core campus be preserved as open space. The State legislation and other background documents pertaining to the project are available at the project website: <https://www.sdcspecificplan.com/documents>.

In December 2019, the State and the County of Sonoma entered into an agreement for the County to prepare a Specific Plan and related Environmental Impact Report that furthers the State's objectives as outlined in State legislation for the site, undertake technical studies, and provide for community engagement in land use planning. The State legislation for the site does not mandate that the State will accept the outcome of the County-driven process, and requires the State Department of General Services to proceed with actions that best represent the interests of the State. However, should the State dispose of the site to private or other non-State entities, the property will be subject to County regulatory control and the policies established in the Specific Plan.

Following the agreement with the State, Permit Sonoma (the County's planning agency) began public outreach in January 2020. Significant community input has been gathered through community meetings, workshops, and online surveys. The majority of the outreach has been conducted virtually to accommodate participation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Information on community input gathered and work completed to date are available at the project website: <https://www.sdcspecificplan.com/documents/>. Community members have also been engaged since 2015 on their vision for the SDC site, with numerous community members providing input over a span of years prior to this Specific Plan process. Community outreach will continue as the Specific Plan is developed and finalized.

### **Vision and Guiding Principles**

Following initial outreach and working with the Planning Advisory Team appointed by Permit Sonoma, the planning team developed a Draft Vision and Guiding Principles. In January 2021, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors reviewed and indicated support for these as a framework to guide the development of the SDC Specific Plan. The full Vision and Guiding Principles are available at the project website. The Vision includes:

"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."

The following are the 10 Guiding Principles for the future of SDC:

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 Resource Conservation
8. Promote Multi-Modal Mobility
9. Ensure Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability
10. Embrace Diversity

In November 2021, Permit Sonoma released three alternatives and an evaluation of the land uses and features included in each of the alternatives. The Alternatives Report is available for review at the project website.

On January 25, 2022, Permit Sonoma recommended a project description framework for the Board of Supervisors' consideration based on underlying project objectives such as the State legislation, the Vision and Guiding Principles. The Board and the public provided comments and input on how to proceed.

#### **Anticipated Development Program and Specific Plan Policy Direction**

***Core Campus Development:*** The development program for the core campus is anticipated to include:

- **A housing development program ranging from 450 to 1,000 residential units within the existing 180-acre developed core campus**, including market-rate and affordable housing, to meet a diversity of community needs. Housing unit types would include small-lot single-family and attached housing, multifamily housing, and “missing middle” housing that reflects the needs of Sonoma County community and workforce, and housing types that support a range of options including family, co-housing, and senior housing, and support services and/or shelter for the unhoused.
- **A non-housing development program within the existing 180-acre developed core campus** including institutional, office, research and development, and other creative uses focused on sustainability and climate-focused enterprises, organizations, and businesses.
  - Small-commercial uses—such as restaurants, cafés, and small retail uses—to support neighborhood needs and walkable lifestyles.
  - Visitor and community-serving uses such as a hotel, meeting and event facilities.
  - Public and community uses, such as a museum honoring the legacy of the site, community center or gathering and recreational spaces, emergency command center, fire station, and social support services.
- **Parks and community gathering spaces and other green spaces within the existing 180-acre developed core campus**, including areas dedicated to wildlife

habitat and movement and areas that serve to buffer the community against future wildfire risks.

- **Potential creation of a new vehicular route** to connect Arnold Dr and Hwy 12, either as emergency access or full-time multi-modal access.
- **Adaptive reuse and new construction** of existing historic contributing buildings such as the Main Building, Sonoma House and key buildings along view corridors. A majority of buildings are likely to be new construction at various heights to ensure efficient use of land and foster compact development, sustainability, and walking and alternative transit use.

**Climate resilient and multimodal infrastructure** may include the development of new streets and bicycle and pedestrian connections, and extensive upgrading of the existing infrastructure as a multi-modal, resilient and sustainable community. Other project components may include but are not limited to development of a microgrid and a recycled water plant/facility, in addition to other utilities and maintenance needs.

***Open Space Preservation:*** The Project will also include policies to govern the retention and preservation of the open space surrounding the 180-acre core campus, which encompasses the vast majority of the SDC Property (approximately 765 acres) and includes two lakes, the Eldridge Cemetery, and Camp Via.. Policies will address the use of infrastructure within the open space such as the existing water system infrastructure.

## **PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

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The Program EIR will describe existing environmental resources and current conditions in the Planning Area, evaluate the environmental impacts of implementing the Project, and identify feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that may lessen or avoid adverse environmental impacts. The analysis will focus on the reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect physical environmental effects that could result from implementation of the Project.

The following CEQA environmental issue areas will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services, Recreation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Transportation and Traffic
- Wildfire Hazards

The topic of Mineral Resources will not be addressed in the EIR, as there are no mineral resources within the Planning Area.

The EIR will also evaluate potential cumulative and growth-inducing effects of the proposed Project, and alternatives to the Project. The CEQA-required No Project alternative will evaluate the environmental impacts should the Board of Supervisors not adopt the Specific Plan. Alternatives that would avoid or lessen significant environmental effects related to the proposed Project will be discussed.

## **SCOPING MEETING**

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Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.9(a)(2), scoping meetings are required for projects that may have statewide, regional, or area-wide environmental impacts. The County has determined that this Project meets this threshold. A public scoping meeting has been scheduled and will be held virtually on Thursday February 17 at 05:30 PM PST. Verbal comments regarding the scope of the proposed Program EIR will be accepted at the meeting. Written comments can also be mailed or emailed to the above-mentioned address, addressed to Brian Oh, before the close of the NOP public comment period.

Please contact Brian Oh at [Brian.Oh@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Brian.Oh@sonoma-county.org) or (707) 565-1931 with any questions regarding this notice or the scoping meeting.

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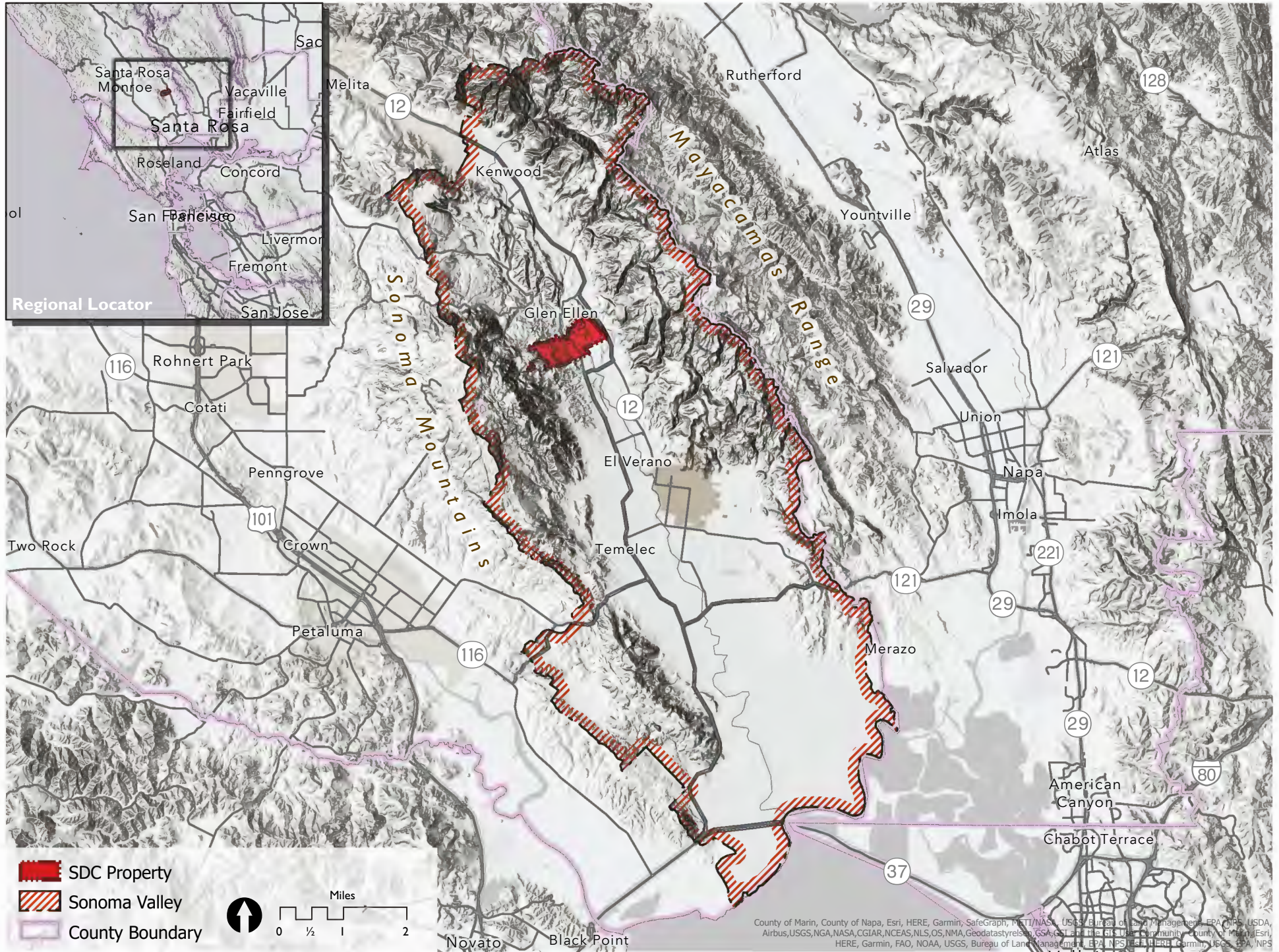
Brian Oh, Comprehensive Planning Manager  
Permit Sonoma

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Date



FIGURE 1: REGIONAL CONTEXT

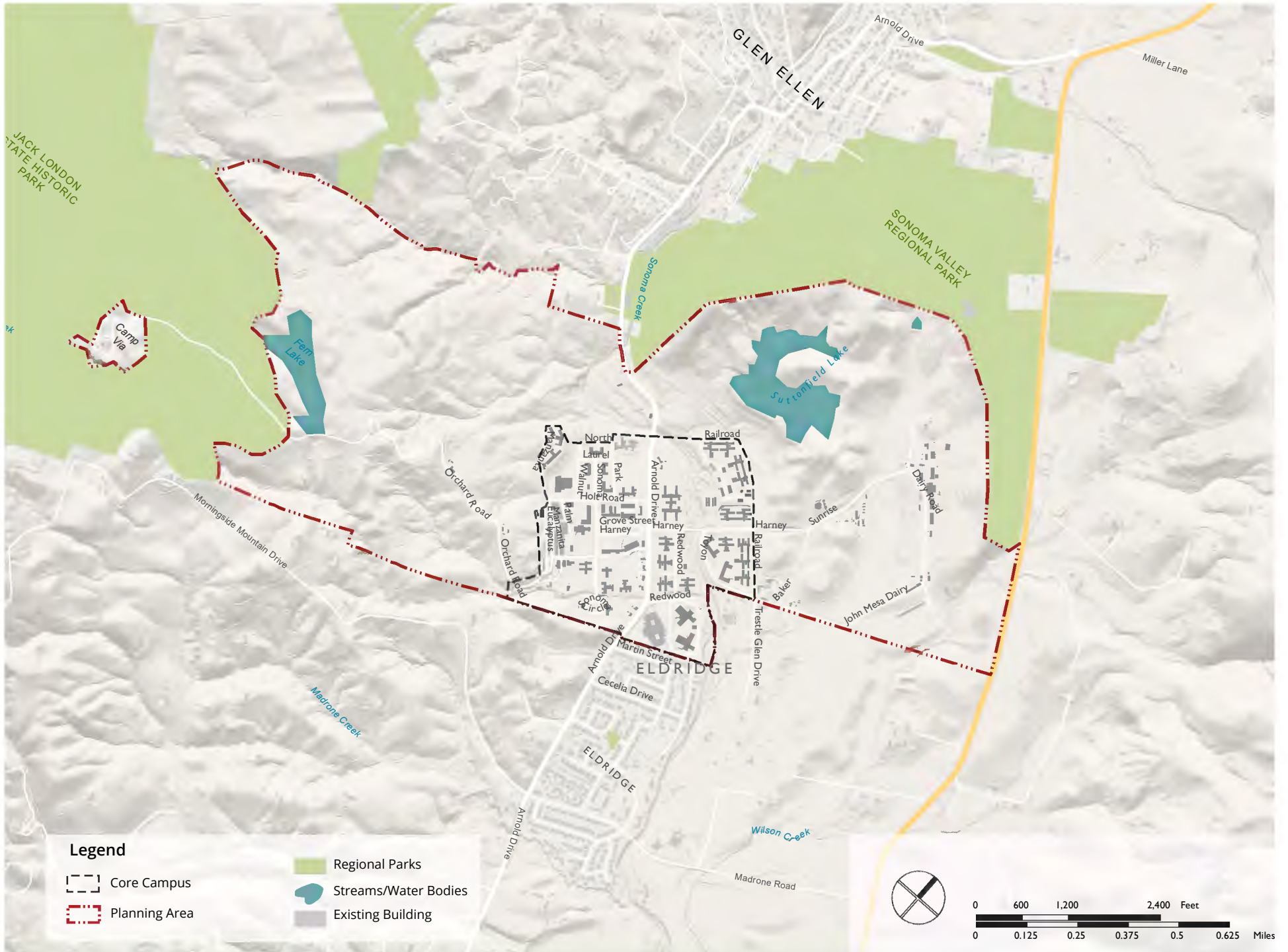


Source: WRT, 2018; County of Sonoma, 2020; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

County of Marin, County of Napa, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, IntelliMap, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, Airbus, USGS, NASA, CGIAR, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, GSA, CSTI, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, US Forest Service, USGS, EPA, NPS



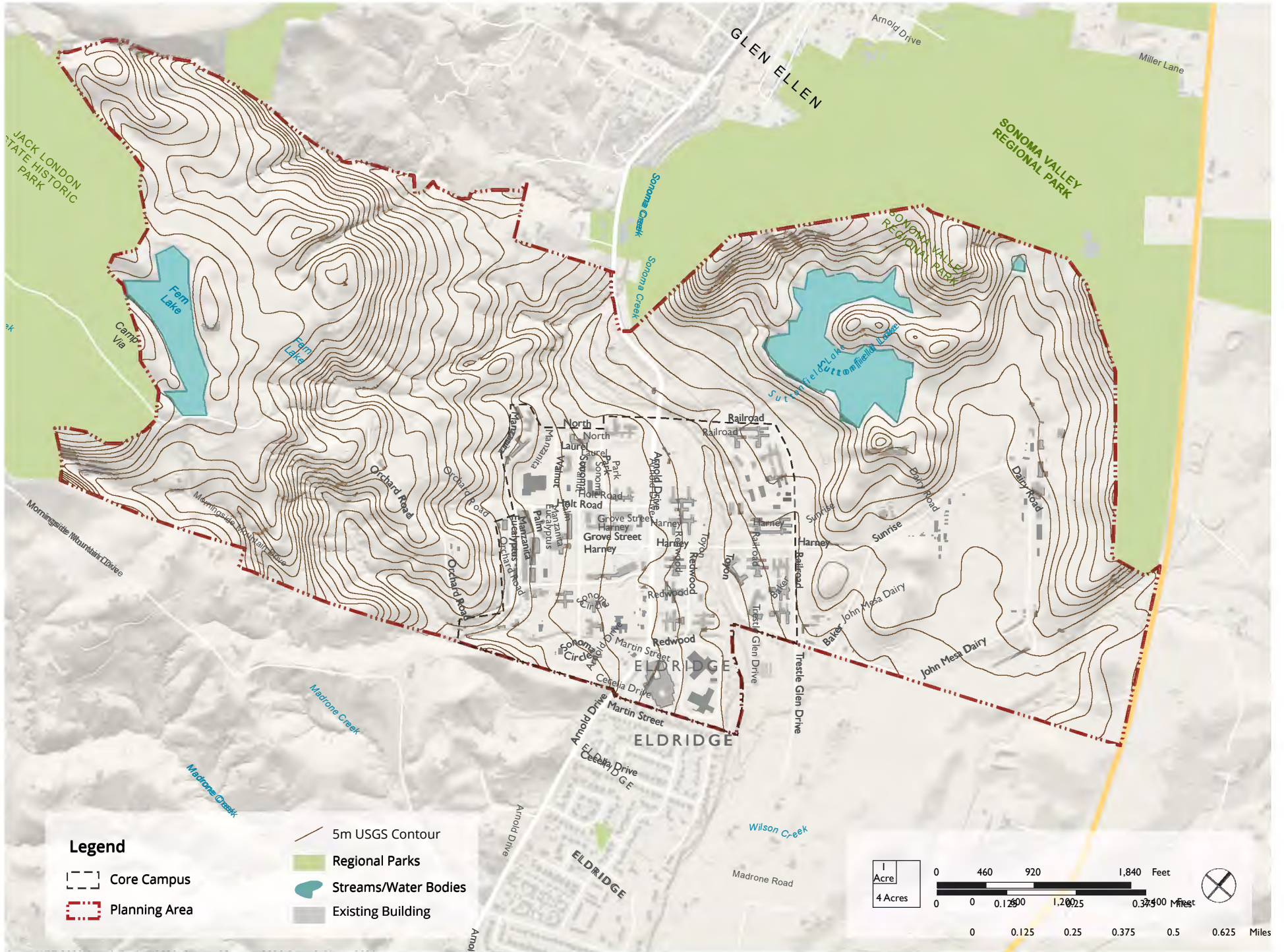
**FIGURE 2: PLANNING AREA**



Source: WRT, 2018; Page & Turnbull, 2020; County of Sonoma, 2020; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021



**FIGURE 3: SITE TOPOGRAPHY**



Source: WRT, 2018; Page & Turnbull, 2020; County of Sonoma, 2020; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021