

The
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

REQUEST FOR INTEREST

RIO DELL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

410 4th Avenue, Rio Dell, CA 95562
Rio Dell, California

April 20, 2026

The Department of General Services,
the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection,
and the City of Rio Dell



Invitation and Premise

The State of California, acting by and through the Department of General Services (DGS) on behalf of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), is proposing the construction of a new, Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Headquarters Facility. This facility is in the community of Rio Dell.

The State acquired a 17.9 acre site in 2023, and the project is current in design and in environmental review (more information regarding the environmental review of the project can be found [here](#)).

While presently contemplating the entirety of the parcel for the project, there is a possibility of up to two acres of the property to be sold or leased for the purposes of supportive commercial development – specifically, a hotel/motel.

The purpose of this RFI is twofold.

- First, the State and the City of Rio Dell are interested in gauging interest from developers in redeveloping the site.
- Second, the State and Rio Dell are interested in understanding the financial feasibility of such a redevelopment, including what conditions would be necessary to achieve feasibility.

With these goals in mind, we invite developers who specialize in hotels/motels and who have an interest in developing up to two acres (total) in Rio Dell to respond to this RFI.

If you have an interest in this opportunity, we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dan Millsap, Deputy Director
Real Estate Services Division
Department of General Services

BACKGROUND:

The Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Headquarters: Relocate Facility project involves the planning and construction of a new, modern facility in Rio Dell to replace the existing, outdated site in Fortuna.

The new facility will include an administration building, standard two-engine fire station, dozer/dozer transport building, fueling station, auto shop, service center, self-contained breathing apparatus repair building, emergency command center, telecommunications building, training building, fitness center, covered vehicle wash rack with water recycling system, a covered parking structure for 15 vehicles with photovoltaic panels, two generator/pump/storage buildings with generators, a radio communications tower, and associated site development. Additional infrastructure includes landscaping and irrigation, site lighting, and fencing.



The new Rio Dell location will consolidate all functions into a single, purpose-built campus, improving operational efficiency and reducing reliance on leased space. Additionally, the project will bring approximately 80 personnel to the new site, providing a meaningful economic boost to the City of Rio Dell. Staff presence will support the local economy through daily purchases of consumables, groceries, and meals at local restaurants and businesses. Construction of the new facility is scheduled to be completed in 2031.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL:Site Context – Rio Dell

The 17.9 acre parcel has outstanding highway visibility and highway access. The City has long considered this parcel the premier commercial property in the City due to its outstanding visibility and access.

The property is zoned Community Commercial (CC) which allows a multitude of commercial uses, including visitor serving uses such as motels/hotels, gas stations, restaurants, breweries and retail sales and services. Rio Dell has a current population of about 3,400 people and can accommodate growth of up to about 8,000 people. According to Caltrans, the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is between 17,000 and 20,000 vehicles per day.

Rio Dell has a market (CC Market & Deli), Dollar General, a gardening supply store (Root 101), an autobody repair shop (Kreations), two automotive repairs shops (707 Automotive and the Automotive Shop), two cannabis dispensaries (Proper Wellness and Element 7), a bar (Mingos), a liquor store (E&J Liquors), a barber, a massage business, a destination outdoor store that sells hunting and fishing equipment (Grundman's), coffee shop (Shotz) and three restaurants (DJ's Burger Bar, The Patron Kitchen and Letty's).

Scotia sits immediately south of Rio Dell and has a population of about 1,000 people. Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC), which operates the Humboldt Redwood Mill in Scotia manages approximately 200,000 acres of forestland in Humboldt County, is one of the largest employers in the region. Humboldt Redwood Company employs around 300 to 500 people depending on the time of year and operational needs. The company hires workers for various roles across its mill operations, forest management, environmental services, and administrative positions. Because the timber industry can be seasonal, the workforce may expand during certain periods, particularly during peak logging seasons or when more production is needed at the mill. Scotia has a Market (Hoby's Market & Deli), the Scotia Lodge (formerly Scotia Inn), a card-lock gas station (Renner Petroleum) a water bladder company (Aqua Dam), We Care Medical Services, Massage of the Redwoods and Reaching for Independence which is a day program for adults with intellectual disabilities that develops independent living skills and employment opportunities.

Humboldt County, California, is a popular destination for nature lovers, outdoor enthusiasts, and travelers interested in exploring its Redwood National and State Parks, rugged coastline, rivers, beaches and vibrant arts and culture scene. The region's tourism industry plays a significant and growing role in the local economy. Rio Dell is located on the northern end of the Humboldt Redwoods State Park along the banks of the Eel River. The park contains more than 180 mi (290 km) of hiking trails and receives almost 600,000 visitors annually. According to data from Visit Humboldt, the official tourism organization for the region, Humboldt County attracts approximately 2.5 million visitors per year.

Development Opportunity

Due to the location's proximity to the U.S. Highway 101 and Davis Street interchange, Davis Street frontage, and the proposed CAL FIRE facility, the potential commercial development opportunity is for a hotel/motel. The State is willing to make up to 2 acres of the site available for such commercial use, which could provide an indirect benefit to CAL FIRE's use of the property.

Potential Use of the Private Development by CAL FIRE

As noted above, the new Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Headquarters in Rio Dell will bring approximately 80 full-time CAL FIRE personnel to the area, creating some opportunities for local economic activity.

Importantly for any developer to consider, it should be noted that CAL FIRE's operational model is largely self-contained. For example, CAL FIRE maintains its own on-site fuel storage and dispensing systems (and state vehicles are required to use on-site fuel as a matter of fiduciary responsibility)

However, the State anticipates that there could be some potential use by the State in the event that a hotel/motel were developed adjacent to the CAL FIRE project.

While a hotel/motel development could not assume consistent CAL FIRE patronage, the CAL FIRE property may generate occasional, short-term lodging demand. The following represents a listing of such potential events, though the State cannot make any guarantee that attendees would choose to utilize an adjacent hotel/motel.

- Continuing Professional Trainings (CPT): Held twice annually (January–February), with 50–75 attendees per session.
- All Hands Meeting: One-day event each April with approximately 150 attendees.
- Rehire Training: Two to three sessions annually (May–June), with 80–100 firefighters per session.
- SONCAL Conference: Biennial, two-day event with approximately 50 attendees.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:*Potential Purchase by Rio Dell*

At present, it is anticipated that – pending the successful conclusion to this RFI – the State shall consider the sale of up to the two aforementioned acres to the City of Rio Dell.

The property would be deed restricted consistent with the intended commercial use (hotel/motel), which would likely qualify the property as “exempt surplus property” for purposes of the Surplus Land Act.¹ This arrangement would enable the City to proceed directly to a formal, competitive solicitation to award the property to a developer.

Competitive Solicitation by Rio Dell

Subsequent to the purchase of the property, and based upon feedback obtained during the RFI process, Rio Dell would issue either a Request for Proposals (RFP) or a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for commercial redevelopment.

This would be a formal, competitive solicitation, and would include traditional submission requirements such as the following:

- Developer qualifications and experience with similar projects
- Financial capacity and proposed capital structure
- Detailed development concept (site plan, building program, design character)
- Pro forma financial analysis demonstrating project feasibility
- Project timeline and milestones
- Proposed purchase price or economic terms
- Evidence of market demand and operational strategy
- Approach to satisfying compatibility requirements with CAL FIRE operations

Selection, Negotiation, and Entitlement Process

While subject to change, and while the City Council shall ultimately select the developer, the City and State anticipate partnering in the evaluation and scoring process, which may include the conducting of interviews. Subsequent to an award, the City and the selected developer shall negotiate a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA).

Upon concluding negotiations, the developer shall be responsible for pursuing discretionary entitlements (conditional use permit, design review, etc.) and due diligence (environmental Phase I/II, geotechnical, title review) prior to closing. For plan reviews and inspections, the City of Rio Dell will serve as the Authority Having Jurisdiction.

¹ See Government Code Section 54221(f)(1)(J)

Important Note Concerning Compatibility with State Use

Any proposed commercial development adjacent to the CAL FIRE Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Headquarters must be compatible with CAL FIRE's 24/7 emergency operations.

The following requirements are critical and non-negotiable:

- **Operational Compatibility:** Development must not generate noise, light pollution, or traffic that could disrupt CAL FIRE's continuous operations. The CAL FIRE campus must maintain uninterrupted, 24/7 access to Davis Street.
- **Restricted Access:** No pedestrian or vehicular traffic, loading/unloading, parking, storage, deliveries, or services associated with the commercial development may access or traverse any portion of the CAL FIRE campus.
- **Emergency Vehicle Access:** The site must accommodate a range of emergency vehicles, including two dozer transports and/or tractor-trailers up to 65 feet in length traveling in each direction. A minimum of three dedicated 12-foot-wide travel lanes (two-way traffic plus an emergency access lane) must be maintained with unimpeded access to Davis Street. These lanes must be exclusive to CAL FIRE and may not be shared with any unrelated development functions.
- **Visibility and Road Standards:** The Davis Street access point must maintain clear sightlines in both directions and comply with all Caltrans freeway access standards. Preliminary discussions with Caltrans have indicated a preference for aligning any new access roads with Ireland Street; however, no final determination has been made.
- **Environmental Compliance:** The CAL FIRE project is currently undergoing environmental review. Any proposed commercial development must not interfere with or delay CAL FIRE's environmental compliance or construction schedule. Developers should assume that a separate CEQA review will be required for any commercial project.

These parameters are essential to ensure the safety, functionality, and uninterrupted operation of CAL FIRE's emergency response mission. Developers must design proposals that fully respect these operational boundaries.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH RIO DELL:Overview

Humboldt County's future economic opportunity areas are expected to center around visitor serving facilities such as modern hotels, gas stations and charging facilities. This site is adjacent to the freeway and is ideal for these types of investments.

Further, the City has the capacity to provide sewer and water services to a 2-acre commercial development, including a motel/hotel. It is also the City's understanding that with the recent upgrades to PG&E's local substation, there is adequate energy to serve a small commercial development.

Direct Incentives

The City of Rio Dell, utilizing excess funding secured through the state budget process for the site, may be able offer the following financial incentives:

- **Permit & Impact Fee Reductions** – waive or reduce building permits, utility connection fees, or impact fees.
- **Land Contribution** – the City may sell or lease the parcel at below-market rates.

Indirect Incentives

Further, the City can offer developers the following:

- **City Priority** – Given the high priority placed on the development of this land by the City consideration may be given to other potential incentives, for example time limited TOT waivers or reductions, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and or time limited property tax abatements.
- **Public Infrastructure Upgrades and Extensions** – City invests in new sidewalks, lighting, or sewer/water hookups to reduce project costs.
- **Grant Preparation** – Make application to CDBG or other sources for complete streets (including pedestrian improvements) on Eastern Davis street and other locations, connecting the project site to the Eel River Trail and creating a walkable loop of 1.9 miles for hotel guests.
- **Expedited Permitting** – City guarantees approvals within certain time parameters or pre-permits in order to avoid delays.
- **Tourism Promotion** – city works with county tourism boards and chambers to market the town as a destination (hiking, fishing, festivals).
- **Event Guarantees** – partner with local organizations (sports leagues, wedding venues, college events) to funnel business into a hotel.

- **Workforce Training** – coordinate with local community colleges to provide trained hospitality workers, making it easier for a hotel to staff up.
- **Grants** – leverage USDA Rural Development grants, CDBG funds, or state economic development funds.
- **Signage** – install highway signage, billboards, or local wayfinding to direct traffic to the new hotel/motel. Reevaluate height restrictions on site logo displays for highway traffic..
- **Regulatory Assistance** - to navigate strict underground storage tank regulations, air quality permits, and hazardous materials handling.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Critical Note: this RFI is not a solicitation. It is a request for information that the state will use to determine interest and feasibility for whether the potential for the proposed commercial development exists. As noted previously, after receiving and evaluating responses, and potentially conducting interviews, Rio Dell will still undertake a formal, competitive process to select a developer or developer team.

For the purposes of this RFI, DGS is only interested in submissions from entities with experience in the development of hotels/motels. Only serious interest would be appreciated.

In responding to this RFI, please submit the following:

1. A statement on the development team's qualifications and experience in development of hotels/motels.
2. A development concept statement indicating what the development team is proposing for the site.
3. A feasibility explanation that contains the following:
 - a. The basis for belief that what is proposed would be financially viable at the site, including listing any significant assumptions (such as a presumed interest rate or purchase price) being made.
 - b. The anticipated total cost to entitle, design, and construct the proposed use, including any significant assumptions factoring into the estimate.
 - i. The estimate should be broken out with sufficient detail for the State and Rio Dell to assess reasonableness.
 - c. Any major possible constraints that, if existing, could make the proposed development infeasible.
4. A conceptual schedule showing durations for the redevelopment of the site and critical process steps.

After the close of the RFI deadline below, the state may elect to invite you for further discussions to explore your development concept. Again, please be aware that this RFI is to allow the state to explore new ideas and in no way is committing to any particular plan or concept. An RFI is to seek input only and does not replace the normal solicitation process.

SUBMISSION DETAILS:

1. **Submission Deadline:** Responses are due by 5:00 PM on **May 25, 2026**.
2. **Submit Responses Electronically To:**

Dan Millsap, Deputy Director
Dan.millsap@dgs.ca.gov
3. **Questions:** If there are questions, please submit an email to the address above.