

San Quentin Reuse Planning Committee Minutes

Wednesday, October 9, 2002

San Rafael Corporate Center

Committee Members Present:

Jessuina Perez-Teran

Bob Brown for Al Boro

Marsha Marovich for Jim Dupar

Alex Amoroso

Dana Miller

Stephen Roulac

Steve Kinsey

Staff and Consultants Present:

Kristin Drumm Collins, Marin County CDA

Dan Dawson, Marin County CDA

Alex Hinds, Marin County CDA

Dan Potash, DVP Associates

Laura Hall, Fisher and Hall Urban Design

Process Timeline and Outcomes

The minutes from September 11, 2002 were reviewed and accepted.

Peter Breen is unable to attend tonight to discuss agenda item 4, Community Benefits and Relationships and will be rescheduled for a future meeting.

San Quentin Reuse Analysis Study

Dan Hillmer of Gast + Hillmer Urban Design presented detailed information on the State reuse study.

The process for reuse of military bases in California is similar to what could happen with San Quentin since the legislative body (Congress) had to take action to initiate and approve the outcome. In conducting his analysis, Dan looked at the costs of closing the sites. Additionally, they were to look at the physical constraints and the assume certain costs in cleaning up environmental contamination, what it would take to close the site and transition the prison functions to another site. They did not look at it from the standpoint from the County, the Prison, or any other agency. The report contained three alternative scenarios containing varying residential densities, commercial uses, and historic preservation. The alternatives were not intended to be conceptual land use plans but rather to provide benchmarks on which analysis could be conducted.

Assumptions

Primary physical constraints included topography, shoreline, and existing through-site circulation. The current 100 foot Bay Conservation and Development Commission(BCDC) setback was assumed as a given as well as the upper reaches of the ridge which would be subject to the County's Ridge and Upland Greenbelt policies. East Sir Francis Drake crosses between the main prison property and the eastern parcel which contains the shooting range.

Since the prison is the oldest in the state, there are many buildings of significant or contributing historical significance which must be considered from a preservation standpoint with any reuse scenario. Hazardous materials are another factor. The prison industry shops are suspected of having significant contamination due to the many industrial activities carried on there over the years. This site is both an opportunity and a constraint and which ultimate use would be affected by the costs to clean the area up.

Traffic was assumed to be balanced and self sustaining such that housing and commercial uses were not generating external trips above and beyond what occurs now. Capacity limitations of East Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and I-580 were also considered. With over 5000 inmates on the site, the utilities are already present for water service and wastewater treatment capacity was assumed to be sufficient.

The Alternatives

Originally there were four alternatives but the highest density, urban village concept was dropped because its assumptions were viewed as totally infeasible. Of the three remaining alternatives, the first assumed development at levels currently permitted by zoning which would have 500 housing units and would have the maximum preservation of historic structures. It would be less in terms of site costs since there wouldn't be significant changes to existing historic structures but presented higher costs in terms of hazardous materials clean up needed for lower density residential uses. There is a high cost to changing the land use of the site.

The second and third alternatives looked at various mixed use scenarios with higher densities. There is an opportunity to make this a whole new community. Because of the intensive use of the site over the years as a prison, it is impractical to restore it to its original pristine condition and is thus a good candidate for reuse emphasizing mixed uses. The two mixed use alternatives assumed 2,000 and 3,500 housing units, respectively and differing levels of historic preservation. The average density range of the 2,000 unit alternative assumes an average of 14 units per acre, where the 3,500 unit alternative is closer to 30 units per acre. Both of these alternatives would concentrate development central to the commercial areas. The key hazardous materials area (prison industry shops) would have a parking structure for the ferry lot and would have a capacity upwards of 8000 cars. Intensity of development would decrease towards the hillside areas.

All the three alternatives have one commonality: density decreases as you get farther away from the commercial and retail core of the site. Take advantage of the information in the report to consider what might make sense, and include those aspects into the discussion.

Questions and Comments:

- *Is there a conflict in saying that the site would be self sustaining and not generate additional traffic beyond what is already there, and then saying that the site would be a regional transit hub, which implies that it would attract trips from around the region?*
Dan responded that commercial uses would not be contemplated that would draw additional traffic above and beyond services required to support residents.

- *Were water based development and uses were considered in the analysis?* Dan noted that BCDC policies were factored in which permit water-dependent uses and some water-related uses within their jurisdiction. Obviously a ferry terminal would need to be adjacent to and in the water so that was assumed.
- *What about the feasibility of the adaptive reuse of the cellblocks? One impression was that there was no amount of money that could be spent to reuse the cellblocks.* Economically, it would not be a priority. With some of the lower buildings it may be more possible to reuse them because they are smaller, more conducive to reuse because of their layout, and it would cost less to rehabilitate them.
- *What proportion of affordable housing does the study estimate?* Fifteen percent, which is the County's current policy.
- It was emphasized that the committee was not constrained to looking at the alternatives contemplated by the report. The committee has an opportunity to consider a variety of options for the site, for example, moving the College of Marin campus to the site. The community needs to define what it sees at the highest and best uses but should not get so detailed as to design the site
- *Land use in the Countywide Plan is characterized in broad terms. There is an independent process to go through at the State level if the site was surplus. What is the surplus process? How far would the state go with its own planning process?* If the prison was surplus, then the site would be offered to other state agencies first. If that didn't occur, then the state could try to have it zoned for the highest and best use to get the most economic benefit and then sell it. In terms of preferences, the committee should look at mixed use and planned development zoning because these involve enough flexibility to not preclude uses that might make the state back off from turning over the property.
- It is important to remember that it will take time to move death row and build a new prison before anything happens at the site.
- Try to not use the conventional planning lingo in documents and public forums. Come up with new ways of saying things that are understandable to the masses.
- It was suggested that the term "highest and best use" be replaced with "strategic use" to avoid implying that more intensive use is the only option for the site.
- In regards to transportation planning efforts and assumptions, people should read the draft Transportation Vision to get an idea of the transportation setting in Marin.

Community Workshop Discussion

A draft agenda of the upcoming workshop was distributed to committee and audience members for discussion.

The layout is structured as an all day affair given the significance of the site. A speaker would talk about the history of the site itself, followed by a self guided walking tour. There would be experts on hand for participants to talk to and record public comments. There would be a keynote speaker at lunch to give a global perspective on the issue. The session after lunch would focus on obtaining people's vision for the best uses for the site. This would be obtained through targeted questions and then people would then prioritize what they liked through sticky dots. The gallery walk is an idea to find out what other groups have talked about. The results of the entire day would then be brought back to the committee for consideration.

Comments:

- At each booth background information will be provided. Based on that info, people would then be asked what they would like to see. All the booths would run concurrently so that people can attend the booths as long as they like. One suggestion was to set a time limit for the amount of time that could spend at each booth. Perhaps the morning session could provide the background information and education, while the ideas can go into the afternoon session.
- It may be a good idea to have a professional facilitator as well as a professional designer in the afternoon group exercises.
- Add a note at the end of the agenda on what the final outcomes will be, such as a final report.
- The afternoon vision session should be redesigned. There was a concern about having the Visual preference survey first. Another thought that the survey was very biased. It was suggested that perhaps it would be better to have examples of densities done well for people to view in the morning session.
- It was recommended to change the sentence to prompt participants in the stream of consciousness writing from "I live/work/play at the new San Quentin, and this is what it looks and feels like" to "I live/work/play in Marin and my vision for San Quentin is..."
- The first session in the morning should also include a brief overview of the San Quentin process, as well as the history of San Quentin.
- Maybe the meeting should be split up into two days if it would be more possible to get more attendance.
- The objective of the workshop is to get an idea of what should be at the site.
- With regards to concerns on social equity, more outreach needs to be done to Novato, Marin City, and the Canal areas to get a more diverse representation at the workshop. Simple flyers would be a good start. The question is how can we bring people who don't normally participate to come to the workshop to give their input, which would be a first step towards social equity. At a minimum, there should be translations from English to Spanish and English to Vietnamese.

- Maybe have the meeting at different sites in communities we wish to reach.
- If we pushed the workshop back towards January to get a better product and still meet our target of completing this process by March, would that suffice?
- It may be better to shorten the program. Also, how deep do we want to get people involved with the site? It should probably be simpler to get them more engaged in the morning effort. It should be emphasized that the program *not* prejudice people's ideas for the site.
- Define planning terms in the introduction and gear the terms towards the layman.
- If there are communities of special need, it may be more useful to do outreach to them in their own communities. Input on this should be solicited from Jessuina. Would those communities prefer a different presentation style for us to provide us the best opportunity for them to participate?

Next Steps

The sense is that visiting the Gaia building is not the in the best interest of the Committee right now.

A dry run of the vision event will be done in November or December to iron out any kinks.

Next Meeting: 6:00, Wednesday, November 13, 2002, San Rafael Corporate Center