

San Quentin Reuse Planning Committee Minutes

Wednesday, April 10, 2002

San Rafael Corporate Center

Committee Members Present:

Alex Amoroso
Al Boro
Phil Frank
Steve Kinsey

Dana Miller
Jessuina Perez-Teran
Bill White

Committee Members Absent:

John Dupar
Paula Gutierrez
Huey Johnson
Larry Lanctot

Annette Rose
Stephen Roulac
Sim Van der Ryn

Staff and Consultants Present:

Kristin Drumm Collins, Marin County CDA
Dan Dawson, Marin County CDA
Alex Hinds, Marin County CDA

Dan Potash, DVP Associates
Michele Rodriguez, Marin County CDA

Process Timeline and Outcomes

The minutes from March 13 were reviewed and approved with no changes.

Supervisor Kinsey explained the evolution of the process and how the efforts of the committee will be taken forward. Specifically, the outcome to this is a preferred land use alternative which will be forwarded to the Countywide Steering Committee for incorporation into the Countywide Plan.

Other items noted: A fall community event will be held for further public input and all committee members who have expressed an interest in taking a tour of the San Quentin property have done so.

Point San Quentin Land Use and Policy Report

Staff presented a brief summary of the report to the committee, which provides general guidelines for San Quentin. The land use policy report was created to address development issues within the community in the mid-1980's and is not a community plan. It recommended the implementation of planned district zoning which would result in design review for most future construction. Comments included:

- San Quentin Village has a distinguished look-and-feel and although our recommendations will relate to the prison site, implications of the ultimate preferred alternative should be considered in relation to San Quentin Village. the implications of our plan to the existing development.
- The main concern of the village residents with development of the prison property is traffic through their community. The residents would prefer to see the west gate entrance used as a main entrance, while turning Main St. in the village area into a cul-de-sac to maintain the existing traffic flow and integrity of the area, and to limit access through the east gate.
- Parking was also brought up as an issue, as many commuters use the streets in the village area for parking. Residents depend on street parking for their homes. It is believed that the cul-de-sac will help solve this issue.

Natural Assets and Opportunities

BCDC Jurisdiction

Jeffrey Blanchfield of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) discussed BCDC's role involving development requirements for properties within its jurisdiction and the significance of the Bay Plan to the San Quentin property. BCDC requires that any development occurring within its jurisdiction obtain permits and provide maximum feasible public access as a condition of the project, depending on the use of site. For example, the condominium complex in San Quentin Village was required to provide public access to the shoreline portion of the project. BCDC has jurisdiction over water areas and inland 100 feet from mean high tide.

The Bay Plan (BCDC's guiding document) looks at the entire bay shoreline and designates priority use areas such as ports, recreation, transportation, etc. Local governments determine the underlying land uses and those uses are incorporated into the Bay Plan, but BCDC retains permit authority over ultimate development proposals within its jurisdiction. In general, the Bay Plan discourages fill, whether soil, cantilevered structures, floats, etc., unless specifically needed for a water-related use.

In the plan, East Sir Francis Drake is designated as a scenic drive and a vista point is recommended in the hills above the site. Since the original Bay Plan in 1968, Point San Quentin has been designated as a ferry site.

While the current Bay Plan does not specifically address the type of development that should occur at San Quentin, it does recommend that the property be considered for a possible ferry and transit site. Although there are not plans to

revise the Plan in the near future, it can be amended to include notes outlining the type of development that the community feels is important for the property.

Should BCDC set priorities for San Quentin as a possible site for ferry and transit use?

The Water Transit Authority (WTA) has primary authority in this area. The WTA indicates several proposals for ferry terminals around Marin in its December 12, 2001 plan. BCDC should work with the WTA if a ferry terminal is proposed for the site.

Once there are specific land use designations for the site in the Countywide Plan then a request is submitted to amend the Bay Plan to be consistent with our Plan.

A public comment suggested restoration of bay marsh and should this be integrated into Bay Plan and San Quentin plan?

Bay Trail

Dan Dawson provided a brief overview of the Bay Trail program. The Bay Trail consists of a system of trails that encircle San Francisco Bay. In the vicinity of the prison, the current Bay Trail alignment runs along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to Highway 580, where it links to trails along the eastern shoreline in San Rafael. It was noted that it would be preferable to change the alignment through the San Quentin property so that it runs near the shoreline.

Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Policy

Marin's Countywide Plan policies regarding the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt area call for moving development off of ridgelines and clustering it lower on the hill. To achieve this, planned district zoning must be applied. Furthermore, the permitted densities in the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt area should not exceed one dwelling unit per 10 acres. However, the Marin Countywide Plan does not clearly define the boundary of the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt and most all of the prison site is not in the requisite planned district zone. As part of this process, a more precise boundary of the policy area will be determined and appropriate zoning designations recommended.

Environmental Resources

Michele Rodriguez summarized the findings from a 1991 EIR concerning natural resources on the San Quentin property. According to that document, no species of significance were identified in the project development area but that aquatic species were not specifically addressed.

Committee member Miller mentioned that star thistle removal may be an issue. In the water, some native algae been diminished. Inter-tidal invertebrate species such as clams and algae should be preserved. Other sites on the property should be considered for resource protection, such as the pond and adding to the marsh.

Natural Communities:

Lots of non-native species to be removed. Should have looked at Coho Salmon and also looked at water-related restoration issues.

Supervisor Kinsey noted that over time we will overlay constraints on a base map, which will be useful for us to identify where the development should go. The constraint maps could include riparian protection areas, streamside setbacks, slope stability, and geologic maps.

Historic Structures and Preservation

Historic structures - Jay Turnbull Assoc. Dave Rockasalva. Page & Turnbull.

Jay Turnbull of Page-Turnbull presented the criteria used to determine if a site or object is significant (see Chapter 3, page 11 in the Technical Appendix).

The prison property is significant in its use as such, in addition to the architecture. The other criteria, such as association with a famous person, is not as clear-cut. Protections for significant resources include funding for conservation and restoration, review of significance, and reuse options. Even so, the buildings can still be demolished. The Lead Agency for a project can make a determination of overriding considerations that would allow for demolition of a historic structure, however, federal or state funds cannot be used to demolish structures on the historic register. Conversely, Prop 40 monies are available for restoration efforts.

Very significant buildings include main prison (east, south, and west blocks), the quad area comprising buildings 18 and 22, and the infirmary. Significant buildings include the prison industry shops, north block, many of the houses in the eastern area of the property, and various maintenance and shop buildings.

There are not very many prisons that have been reused, mainly because the physical characteristics of such facilities do not lend themselves to adaptive reuse. However, some examples of prisons that have been reused:

- Eastern State penitentiary, Philadelphia, 1820, many things proposed here but nothing completed.
- Allegheny County jail, Pittsburgh. Reuse successful, office and institution spaces, which include floors of, County courts occupies space.

- Charles Street Jail, Boston - converted to a hotel. \$75 million.
- Norfolk County Jail in Dedham, MA – Conversion to Market Rate Housing
- Alcatraz Island - Tourist Attraction.

While there are a variety of reuse scenarios, campus-style facility versus a single-use project is probably more suitable for San Quentin.

Comments:

Dan Potash mentioned that three key issues remain concerning historic reuse of San Quentin:

1. Financial feasibility for reuse of buildings – there is a substantial amount of building area for reuse (especially the cell blocks, which may have limited reuse options and significant costs to adapt).
2. Physical characteristics: shape of cellblocks creates huge challenge for design.
3. The mass and prominence of the cellblocks will affect the reuse and value of the rest of the property. Cellblocks are located so central and takes up such a huge amount of land it hinders remaining portions of property.

Bill White asked how it would be possible to come up with an alternative without having more detailed information about the integrity of the buildings and the costs to improve/rehabilitate them.

The ultimate decision on whether to reuse is made by the Lead Agency – Potential mitigations when demolishing historic structures include recordation or preservation of representative structures.

Many of the historically significant structures have been seismically retrofitted already, including the cell blocks, and others are in design now. This can reduce their historic value if not done sensitively.

Dan Potash noted that the State Historic Preservation Office must review and comment on preservation issues related to state structures. They don't recognize the separate distinctions on the study maps.

Bill White suggests maintaining a smaller portion of the site: 5 cells by 3 stories and that's what's maintained: Demolish the rest.

Alex Hinds asked the committee what is the degree of Marin County “branding” recognition that is identified with this site for Marin.

Buildings 18 and 22 which date to the 1850's should be kept of any of the structures on site because they are the oldest prison buildings on the west coast and feature a narrow floor plate which enhances reuse options.

Consider saving the murals in the dining hall as they contribute towards the overall significance of the property.

Alex Hinds noted that the end product from this process will be Countywide Plan land use and zoning recommendations with a range of land use types. The level of specificity will not be at the project or Specific Plan level but rather identification of opportunities, constraints, potential development envelopes, resource protection areas, and policy guidance. See the Saint Vincents-Silveria plan as a model.

Public Comment

- The San Quentin Village community is not into 'maximum excitement' and would rather create a cul-de-sac of Main Street to preclude through traffic.
- Closure of the prison will result in increased property values and less affordability. Many existing residents could no longer afford to live there.

Next Steps

- Committee members will be surveyed shortly to determine the best date for the mixed-use communities tour (May 18, June 1, June 8).
- Evaluate the current collection of photos for completeness and take photos for missing items. Identify buildings by number (keyed to master list) and post on web site. Use to enhance historic preservation discussion.
- Bring a large copy of the topic schedule next time.
- Review the 1991 EIR for additional historic information.

Next Meeting: 6:00, Thursday, May 2, 2002, San Rafael Corporate Center