

# **San Quentin Reuse Planning Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

San Rafael Corporate Center

## **Committee Members Present:**

Bill White

Linda Jackson for Al Boro

John Dupar

Phil Frank

Steve Kinsey

Phil Frank

Stephen Roulac

Dana Miller

Jessuina Perez-Teran

Annette Rose

Huey Johnson

## **Committee Members Absent:**

Paula Gutierrez

Sim Van Der Ryn

Larry Lanctot

Alex Amoroso

John Dupar

## **Staff and Consultants Present:**

Kristin Drumm Collins, Marin County CDA

Dan Dawson, Marin County CDA

Dean Powell, Marin County DPW

Alex Hinds, Marin County CDA

Dan Potash, DVP Associates

## **Process Timeline and Outcomes**

The minutes from May 2, 2002 were reviewed. Dean Powell recommended a minor wording change to the second bullet on page 2 of the minutes. The minutes were approved with changes.

Supervisor Kinsey recommended the committee use the minutes as a checklist for synthesizing key ideas throughout this process. He then reviewed the twelve-month meeting schedule.

## **Circulation and Parking**

Dean Powell, Principal Transportation Planner, Marin County Department of Public Works, provided a follow up discussion on vehicle and pedestrian circulation and parking demand studies. He also highlighted the potential benefits of transit oriented developments based on a recent Caltrans study.

Potential benefits of transit oriented development (TOD):

- Creates mobility choices
- Increase in transit ridership by 20-40%
- A commensurate reduction in the rate of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 20-40%

- Reduce air pollution and congestion rates
- Conserve resources (land and open space) through compact design
- Potential for 20% reduction in parking requirements for development. For example, the city of San Rafael was able to change the parking requirements in the downtown area in 1996.

### Comments

- What is the capacity of Main Street? *A study would need to be completed to determine its capacity which is based on numerous factors, including the geometry of the road (number of lanes, width, design speed, etc.), adjacent land uses, and number of access points. Regardless, it appears that there is potentially a large reserve capacity on Main Street.*

### **Mixed Use Communities and Design**

Laura Hall of Fisher & Hall Urban Design made a presentation on mixed-use community design. Laura's presentation included a discussion on density, design quality, and the interrelationship of residential and commercial uses.

Four periods in history can be identified for urban design patterns (see table 1). These periods are known as a) Historic European Urbanism, b) American Urbanism – old and new, c) Conventional Suburban Development, and d) Exclusive Suburban Development.

The design of a community's "edge" affects the feel. In the American Urbanism model the edge is comfortable. In the Conventional Suburbs model the edges become more distinct and change drastically while city spaces that used to be in the public domain are becoming more private.

#### Principles of edges:

1. Like facing like (similar densities and uses face one another)
  - Property values are high in this model
2. Building heights
3. Retail/commercial
  - Traditional vs. conventional
  - On street vs. off street

#### Tips for good community design:

- Avoid dead spaces by having lots of doors and windows. Entry ways should be spaced about every 30 feet.
- Theaters and farmers markets work well as anchors on downtown edges instead of shopping malls

- Bay windows work well in downtowns by providing additional display space for shops and visual relief architecturally.

Table 1 – Historical Urban Design Periods

	<b>Historic European Urbanism</b>	<b>American Urbanism</b>	<b>Conventional Suburban Development</b>	<b>Exclusive Suburban Development</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>	Pedestrian oriented	Pedestrian oriented	Auto oriented	Auto oriented
<b>Roads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pedestrian streets</li> <li>• wide sidewalks</li> <li>• boulevard</li> <li>• streets next to open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• narrow residential streets</li> <li>• streets next to open space</li> <li>• buildings facing public transit</li> <li>• Ex: downtown Sonoma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide residential streets</li> <li>• Walled collector streets</li> <li>• Crosstown streets/strip malls</li> <li>• Infrastructure more horizontal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gated entrances</li> <li>• Private trails</li> <li>• Private streets</li> </ul>
<b>Gathering Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public plazas</li> <li>• public waterfronts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public plazas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parks/athletic fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private community centers</li> <li>• restaurants</li> </ul>
<b>Shopping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mixed use office/retail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mixed use office/housing retail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indoor private malls</li> <li>• parking lot fronted shopping centers</li> </ul>	
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing facing waterfronts</li> <li>• mixed use housing/retail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• garages in back</li> <li>• parking in back</li> <li>• stoops on ground level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• garages in front</li> <li>• parking lot in front of apartments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large setbacks</li> <li>• backs onto open space</li> <li>• back of house faces open space</li> </ul>
<b>Workplaces</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mixed use office/retail</li> </ul>		

- Street trees provide shade and green. However, trees should not block the retail signs and should be planted on property lines to avoid having the trunk obstruct display windows or doorways.
- Use different pavement styles and materials – not everything has to be decorative paving stones. For example, a window shopping pavement strip of a different material or color than the sidewalk provides a space the passers-by can stop to window shop without psychologically feeling they are obstructing the sidewalk.
- Benches should face activity areas with backs to walls or other fixed objects to provide a sense of security and safety.

- "Terminated Vistas" is a technique used to create a sense of enclosure in an outdoor 'room' (such as the San Rafael mission at the end of A Street).

- Parking design tips:
  - Ample downtown street parking is needed to increase visibility
  - The first floor of a parking garage should have a use other than parking
  - Off-street parking lots create dead space. This effect is especially prominent when fronting on a public street sandwiched between buildings in a higher-density, downtown environment.
  - On-street parking provides convenience for shoppers and a buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and traffic in the street.
- Buildings need to create defensible space. For example, multi family housing should have stoops on the ground floor to help 'keep eyes on the street'. Buildings in general should all face forward towards the street to create a defensible space.
- A good design considers the needs of a wide range of user ages – teenagers and their socialization needs are often ignored in the design of public spaces.
- Use building materials and architecture to create a "sense of place."
- Streets built in a grid or modified-grid pattern and are well connected provide choice of route and disperse vehicle traffic
- Because current zoning regulations tend to separate us by restricting uses, rather than connecting uses together, the "Smart Code" should be used as a zoning tool. The Smart Code is graphically illustrated, small, easily understood, and based on ecological transects. The transect concept provides a cross section of community design from the highest-density central core transitioning to the lower density outer fringes.
- Well-organized community workshops are key tools in design decision making. One option is to use the design charette technique.

### **Commercial Uses**

Bill White described what type of retail/commercial support could be justified and/or necessary for residents and visitors.

### **Characteristics of the Urban vs. the Suburban Model**

- The urban model is characterized with high density, vertical mixed uses with residential on top of retail. A blend of uses is included. The urban model can include a transit center, which must be multi modal.
- Ground floor space needs to be flexibly designed. While certain uses should be discouraged, using an all-retail model is problematic.
- In order for retail to be viable, the amount of retail use must reflect a balanced demand. The three types of demand applicable to this site are: 1) neighborhood demand, 2) transit demand, and 3) tourist demand.
- The urban model includes on-street parking. It is a common mistake to apply a suburban parking model in urban areas. Off-street parking that is provided should be shared amongst uses.
- It is not as challenging as it once was to fund mixed use projects

- Politics play a role. In mixed use projects, level of service requirements are not as relevant in the urban model as they are in the suburban model. This is because the goal is to make traffic slow down to have safer streets rather than encourage the typical suburban model where the goal is to increase traffic capacity by increasing flow and speeds. Politics also play a role in the shared parking concept.
- In the urban model you can build right up to the street rather than set back from it, as is done in the traditional suburban model – traditional setbacks imposed by zoning should be replaced with 'build-to' lines in mixed-use projects.
- Either do a mixed-use project or a suburban model – mixing the two doesn't work.

### Comments

- The question for San Quentin is to determine how much we want to accommodate the traditional development model vs. the urban model.
- Transit is multi modal throughout the world. In terms of physical design it is best to not spend too much time on how it feels. It is important to have a multi-activity, multi-generational approach to the design and ultimate mix of uses but important to remember that changing one aspect of the plan can affect others.
- Whatever happens at San Quentin will have big impacts on what elements are chosen for the site. San Quentin will become an origin and destination point, as well as a through point. All of these must be considered, including countywide impacts.
- Avoid emotional or experiential aspects when developing options – focus instead on the physical.
- Buildings of four to five stories in height would be more than adequate to support retail uses on the site. However, it is important to get an idea of the "feeling" of what is desirable vs. the number of stories.
- Don't take things off the table yet (i.e. buildings taller than 4-5 stories).
- Are there rules of thumb for retail traffic? *A market study would need to be undertaken which results would be greatly influenced by the proposed building mix, use type, transit traffic, and other vehicle traffic as well as tourist attractions in the vicinity.*
- Marin needs a transit hub. In terms of density at San Quentin, we should work within the existing footprints and stay out of the green areas, and it is clear we will have to look outside of our traditional zoning code and parking standards to develop a design for the property.
- Is there an opportunity or role for institutional uses on the site? What unique aspects could this site serve? One possible idea is to open a Guggenheim-type museum.

- This is public land currently, not private property with a development proposal on the table.
- We need also to consider such community serving uses as schools, day care centers, and other uses for the site.
- Don't forget about other uses such as institutional uses, office space, sports fields, etc. – don't get too narrowly focused at this point.
- How many people are lost at each public transportation transfer point? How does this affect mode split? *Traffic and transit modeling will address this.*
- What is our role? We're not developing a project. *This process is to develop and vision and land use recommendations for incorporation into the Countywide Plan.*

### **Next Steps**

- People should start to visualize spaces that do work. We are looking the big picture, from open space areas, ridgelines, transit hubs, and mixed use areas.
- Compile a list of items that work/do not work in these communities
- Question: what density or ratio of people is needed to support retail uses?

Next Meeting: 6:00, Wednesday, July 10, 2002, San Rafael Corporate Center