



## SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN PLANNING ADVISORY TEAM MEETING #2 SUMMARY

Friday, April 3, 2020

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) Specific Plan Planning Advisory Team (PAT) Meeting #2 opened at 1:00 pm via conference call.

Attendees included: PAT members Bob Holloway, John McCaull, Kelso Barnett, Marianne M. Thompson, Molly MacLean, Mollyanne M. Meyn, Nicholas M. Dalton, Nicholas P. Brown, Peter J. O'Hara, Peter Zibblatt, Richard Dale, Vicki A. Hill, Victor Gonzalez, and Yesenia Lemus; County staff Jane Riley, Scott Orr, and Milan Nevajda (former County staff, helping to facilitate transition); and consultants Rajeev Bhatia and Jossie Ivanov of Dyett & Bhatia and Linda Blong and Jennifer Mair of Public Dialogue Consortium.

Sonoma County staff began the discussion by describing leadership changes for the SDC Specific Plan process now that Milan Nevajda is leaving his role with the County. A project manager is in the process of being hired; in the meantime, Mr. Nevajda will be working with County staff, including Tennis Wick, Jane Riley, and Cecily Condon, to ensure that the project moves forward smoothly.

### **3-Month Schedule Update and Specific Plan Scope**

Rajeev Bhatia of Dyett & Bhatia, the lead consulting firm, briefly discussed major upcoming project milestones, including the Background Report and the Architectural Report, currently underway, which will fill some gaps in the WRT report formerly produced. He also briefly discussed the likely switch to a Virtual Community Kick-Off event due to the COVID-19 shelter-in-place directives.

Some PAT members asked questions about the scope of the Specific Plan process and when development boundaries would be set on the site, to ease community concerns about conservation of the SDC site's significant open spaces. In response, County staff discussed the State statute and the parallel process ongoing between the State and Sonoma County to delineate the exact parameters of open space acreage and location to conserve in perpetuity, as well as what mechanism would be used for conservation. County staff said that due to the ongoing process at the County, the Specific Plan project team can't create a firm development boundary yet. They explained that the team's understanding is that development will happen only in the core campus, and that there will be no plans for development outside of that core campus. The Specific Plan will address the interface of the campus with the open space, and would deal with signage, safe and adequate parking at trail heads, etc., but won't deal with trail design or other open space design factors. PAT members asked follow-up questions about active recreation areas, such as the existing ropes course, soccer fields, and equestrian areas, and about the former agricultural uses on the east side of campus, and expressed the hope that the potential for maintaining these uses and areas won't be lost. County staff replied that those uses are part of the ongoing conversation, which will define open space uses and allowed activities. Concern was also expressed by the PAT regarding the length



of time that may be needed to develop the Specific Plan; it was noted that the EIR can be prepared in parallel to the Plan to help with the schedule. No formal change to the schedule has been made by the State in response to the COVID-19 situation.

## **Engagement Plan**

The project team reviewed the plans for the Community Kick-Off event. Formerly, the team had planned to hold a Community Kick-Off Event on the SDC site, with guided site walks and hikes, games and food trucks, and an expert panel discussion about the site's history, architecture, ecology, and market potential. A separate Community Meeting #1 to identify project goals, opportunities, and issues was planned for later in the summer. Now, due to the COVID-19 shelter-in-place directive, the team proposed moving to an online Virtual Community Workshop with in-person events held later in July (or whenever gathering restrictions are lifted).

Jossie Ivanov of Dyett & Bhatia discussed the details of the community engagement event plans. The Virtual Community Kick-Off is proposed as four parts, available through the project website: a series of Zoom webinars on the same topics as the previously proposed Expert Panel Discussion, which will be live streamed and recorded for later viewing; an online quiz with questions about SDC's history, context, and ecology; an online visioning activity that asks participants to rate different priorities for the SDC site and comment on past vision statements created from prior outreach (PAT members will be given the opportunity to comment on the visioning activity before it is released); and an informational map of the site that can be used as a self-guided walking tour once the State reopens public open spaces. The project team would also reach out to area high schools to ask that virtual activities be included in at-home school curricula.

Ms. Ivanov also discussed the revised plans for Community Meeting #1, which will be held in July or whenever gathering restrictions are lifted. In addition to holding a workshop to identify issues, opportunities and goals for the project, the meeting will have some of the elements previously planned for the Community Kick-Off, including food trucks, guided site hikes and walks, games, and an information booth. As the event gets closer, the project team will be looking for community volunteers to help with various aspects of the event.

PAT members then commented on and asked questions about the proposed events. PAT members expressed the importance of reaching out to groups that haven't been engaged much in past efforts, including youth, Latinx communities, Native American groups, and residents with disabilities. Several members asked about Spanish translations for webinars, noting that translation by a member of the local Spanish-speaking community could help to disseminate information. Some PAT members commented that people may be oversaturated on webinars and that schools may not have the staff resources to really engage right now unless materials are very straightforward. Other PAT members noted that there is a lot of concern in the community about how boundaries will be delineated for open space preservation, and expressed the hope that the project team would show development boundary lines as soon as possible.

Linda Blong and Jennifer Mair of Public Dialogue Consortium discussed the Community Conversations piece of engagement. In-person discussions will be put on hold until gathering restrictions have lifted; in the meantime, they can get started by organizing some video conferencing discussions with small groups in the community. They will focus primarily on groups that have been underrepresented in past outreach, including Latinx, youth, Native American, and individuals with disabilities.



PAT comments included the idea to use funds earmarked for in-person activities to create incentives for participation and offers to connect PDC with different community groups.

The project team wrapped up the discussion about outreach by asking for PAT volunteers to help lead webinars, contribute information about recommended hikes, and to help make connections with community leaders and underrepresented groups for outreach.

### **Technical Advisory Teams Formation**

County staff spoke briefly about the process County staff have planned to create Technical Advisory Committees (TACs). They have planned to have at least three TAC groups: Cultural and Historic Preservation, Infrastructure, and Financial/Market Constraints. The County may form one more TAC group focused on Community Engagement. County staff said that TAC members would be pulled from the extensive list of individuals who applied to be on the PAT and from other local experts that County staff knows of. They asked for PAT members to recommend others they know of who may be interested.

### **Next Steps**

The project team asked for PAT volunteers to reach out with community contacts and any other comments. The group also discussed that the next PAT meeting will be held over Zoom if gathering restrictions are still in place.

A final discussion arose from a comment by a PAT member that they have heard many questions in the community about whether the SDC site will be used as housing for those experiencing homelessness. County staff noted that there is discussion in the County and State government about whether the site could be used in various ways, but said that there is no decision yet. While the site may be considered for homeless occupancy, there are severe restrictions on use of the site such as major deficiencies in utilities and services. The State has been clear that their current order for evaluating state sites will not interfere with the Specific Plan process.

PAT Meeting #2 closed at 3:10 pm.