



SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN PLANNING ADVISORY TEAM MEETING #3 SUMMARY

Friday, September 4, 2020

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) Specific Plan Planning Advisory Team (PAT) Meeting #3 opened at 1:00 pm. All PAT members were present except for Kelso Barnett and Nick Dalton. The meeting was also attended by Gerald McLaughlin of the State of California’s Department of General Services and Supervisor Susan Gorin.

Schedule Overview

Rajeev Bhatia of Dyett & Bhatia, the lead consulting firm, briefly discussed major upcoming project milestones, including finalizing the Background Report, beginning to develop project alternatives, and upcoming public outreach.

Summary of Community Engagement to Date

Rajeev Bhatia gave an overview of the Virtual Community Kick-Off event, including four webinars, a Virtual Walking Tour, a quiz about the SDC site’s history, and a survey about priorities for the site’s future. He presented key takeaways from the survey, including demographics of survey respondents; greatest assets identified by respondents; key issues identified by respondents; identified priorities for future of SDC; differences in response by younger population; suggestions for paying for improvements; historic Preservation priorities; and preferred housing types to see at the site (please refer to the Survey Report for more details).

Jennifer Mair of Public Dialogue Consortium then discussed the outcomes of the Community Conversations done so far. Eight main themes emerged from their work: appreciation for and desire to protect natural environment; developing SDC to be inclusive, accessible, inviting and safe for community; keeping the Main historical Building but building new additional updated buildings; creating a center for community to thrive together; including community health and education services; including opportunities for small businesses, with entry jobs for youth, internships, jobs for developmental disabilities; ensuring the site has activities for youth and families; and including affordable, accessible housing.

PAT members asked questions and made comments about future outreach. One member asked whether there be additional efforts to reach Latinx community, given they are a substantial makeup of the population of the Valley. Jennifer Mair responded that PDC has hired interns to engage community members and neighbors of people near SDC site and Latinx. PAT suggestions included that the PAT could help with future outreach by forwarding calendar invitations for discussions to stakeholder groups, and that physical flyers and handouts for the Latinx community, posted at local grocery stores (such as the Glen Ellen market bulletin board or the



small grocery store on Madrone Rd) or printed out could be an effective way to reach hard-to-reach groups.

Then the PAT was asked to give input on how the community priorities that emerged from the survey and the Community Conversations should be focused as guiding principles for the Specific Plan. Suggestions included:

- Use the Transform SDC guiding principles from the June 2019 workshop (building on April 2018 workshop) as a starting place;
- Ensure that conservation of and access to open space is integral to the plan;
- Do something “big and bold” – future for people to continue to live in the Valley, including combining great ideas together – perhaps a center of some kind to attract world class attention, capital (funding);
- Balance ecological, housing, preservation, economic, and social service needs for the site;
- Create employment opportunities like SDC used to provide;
- Ensure diversity and inclusion for disability community (e.g. for housing and services);
- Be clear what is practical and realistic for the SDC site. For example, the cost of infrastructure is tremendous but often overlooked, and the timeline until the project is completely developed should be clearly communicated to community;
- Preserve historic buildings, especially west of Arnold Drive, but recognize limitations of their adaptability for housing - what to do with them otherwise, given that they are integral to the character of SDC (*topic to be further discussed at next PAT meeting #4, September 11*);
- Make sure the site will generate revenue and actually be used;
- Include interim uses for the site in the planning to help finance end goals;
- Define economic feasibility: manage expectations about profits versus objectives and to what extent they coincide. State objectives include affordable housing, open space preservation which aren’t necessarily profitable. Provide more clarification of State’s expectations for the site to coordinate with the community (in terms of financial feasibility), more information of parameters they are working with, and make sure the community isn’t misled or promised unlikely outcomes; and
- Ensure that core principles of housing and serving disability communities are fundamental and that housing is the financial driving force.

The PAT was also asked for their opinions on appropriate housing type for the site that reflect desires and needs of community. Comments included: having both market rate and affordable housing at site, mixed income; mixed use housing, as an economically and environmentally sustainable way to sustain the community; affordable housing, as farm workers, the special



needs/disability community, and youth have concerns that they won't be able to continue living in Sonoma Valley; incorporating models of housing for small young families, young adults, and adding amenities and services that cater to these populations, including smaller units that are compatible with the surrounding community; and that units without private yards could take advantage of the area's access to open space without overly large development footprints.

Community Workshop #1

The first of the Community Workshops will be held on Wednesday, September 30th, 5:30-7pm. Rajeev Bhatia gave an overview of the proposed meeting format: held over Zoom with breakout discussions about the future of the site, live polls, and a brief presentation by the project team on the Background Report and community outreach results to date. The meeting would involve presenting vision/guiding principles for workshop participants to react to, and would have both a Spanish language breakout room with bilingual facilitation and a youth breakout room.

PAT members commented that they would be able to forward meeting invites to their networks, but that it would be useful to include the agenda in the meeting invite; that local newspapers should be contacted to publish details about the meeting; that the vision statement and guiding principles should be added to the graphic schedule as clarification that is the purpose of the first workshop; and that the meeting should plan for needs for those with accessibility concerns, including closed captioning. County staff clarified that they can provide accessibility accommodations with 72 hours notice, which will be made clear in the meeting invitation. There was also a discussion about whether the community would have enough time to review the Background Report in advance of the meeting, but a majority of PAT members agreed that publication of the Background Report about a week in advance of the meeting should leave sufficient time for community review.

Next Steps

The next PAT meeting, scheduled for Friday, September 11, will deal with the findings of the Background Report.

PAT Meeting #3 closed at 2:51 pm.