

October 2, 2015

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 308
San Rafael CA 94903



SUBJECT: Civic Center Campus Improvements

Dear Supervisors:

At this important time in the Marin County Civic Center's revitalization, Marin Conservation League urges that a concerted effort be made during current implementation of master planning and facilities assessments to focus on the site and campus of the Civic Center in its entirety, by integrating Civic Center buildings, campus connections and pathways, and the natural environment, into a unified, well-designed, and well-functioning composite whole.

This site is important to the people of Marin County as the centerpiece of their government, cultural and recreational activity, and as a gathering place that should be accessible to all. In addition, the County has a responsibility to protect the site's integrity and unique status as a State Historic Site, a National Historical Landmark, and a nominee as a World Heritage Site.

We encourage the County to include the public, including County employees, in the current planning efforts through significant countywide outreach to gather community input and to build community support.

Although there are many aspects to consider in the process, MCL believes that those discussed below are particularly important:

The need for increased safe pedestrian pathways and connections for all users

Well-planned, safe, pedestrian pathways **integrating** the campus including comfortable, well-designed crossings of Civic Center Drive and Peter Behr Drive are critical. The campus would be significantly improved if there were pedestrian and bicycle circulation **throughout**, reduced pedestrian and bicycle contact with autos, disincentives for autos to use Civic Center Drive as a thoroughfare and priority given to pedestrian and bicycle connection between the campus and surrounding infrastructure including North San Pedro Road, the SMART multi-use path, the Northgate Promenade, McInnis overcrossing, and pedestrian access for adjacent neighborhoods, including those west of 101 via a pedestrian crossing or access along the south side of the SMART station.

The need for protection and restoration of Gallinas Creek

Water from Gallinas Watershed flows through the Civic Center site into the south fork of Gallinas Creek. Protection of the creek's tributaries and wetlands, that run adjacent to and through the Civic Center site including the lagoon, is mandated by federal Clean Water regulations and

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Regional Water Quality Control Board standards. The Creek's tidally influenced channels provide habitat for egrets, rails, songbirds, and mammals, and the marshes are feeding grounds for native predators.

Gallinas Creek has recently suffered destructive impacts, mitigated out-of-watershed, due to the construction of the SMART rail. The cumulative effects of further negative impacts, mitigated or not, would increasingly harm the ability of the watershed to recover and thrive. MCL recommends that all future paving, construction and maintenance projects on the Civic Center Campus put a priority on eliminating toxins, sediment and runoff into the channels of the creek and to daylight tributaries wherever possible. **It's time to integrate restoration of these natural systems into the campus' revitalization planning.**

Support for a permanent Farmer's Market

MCL supported measure B, passed by voters in 2012, and continues to support the construction of a permanent Farmer's Market at the Civic Center site. Its construction would strengthen the connection between East and West Marin and offer increased opportunities for the public to value Marin's rich agricultural history and reap the benefits of local sustainably produced food.

Protection of views into and out from the site

All new or renovated structures on the site should protect views, of Mt. Tam and others, and clear lines of sight from and into the Civic Center campus, and should comply with the Civic Center Open Space ordinance of 1992. The removal of trees along northbound 101 highlighting a view of the corporation yard in front of the Civic Center campus was unfortunate and should be remedied.

Need for coordinated review and responsible stewardship

In closing, planning to update and revitalize areas of the Civic Center, including roadways, pathways, plaza, and buildings, have been long overdue. The area is a countywide icon. It is Marin's center for architectural excellence and innovation, for cultural and recreational events, and is Marin's political heartland. While the work may be done in stages, the overall planning must be coordinated, not undertaken isolated project by project, to ensure a cohesive, attractive, environmentally sound outcome. This requires leadership. It is a legacy project, and those who assume leadership will be remembered for this important achievement.

Sincerely,



Kate Powers, President

cc: Civic Center Conservancy Commission
Brian Crawford, Director, Marin County Community Development Agency
Pat Echols, Principal Engineer, Marin County Dept. of Public Works
San Rafael City Council

KP:dp