



## **Black Point – Green Point Community Plan**

Community Meeting #2 – June 5, 2014

Summary of Public Comments

*The following is a summary of the ideas and input received at the June 5, 2014 Black Point – Green Point Open House. Feedback submitted via email, letter, or Survey Monkey from those unable to attend the meeting in person has not been included in this summary.*

### **COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND HOME SIZE**

Participants were evenly divided on the topic on whether to including additional standards in the community plan to regulate home size in order to protect community character. Roughly half indicated that there should be additional standards, while the other half indicated there should not.

#### **Options for additional standards to regulate home size**

A number of potential options for regulating home size were presented at the workshop. The majority of respondents chose Option 1, which is to maintain the existing practice and not include additional standards. Comments suggested that the diversity of home sizes in the community is an asset and additional regulations are unnecessary, that the current review process is adequate, and no change is needed. A smaller number selected Option 2, which would regulate the median Floor Area Ratio in the entire community. A few also chose Option 3, which would only regulate the median Floor Area Ratio for properties located in the “old Black Point” or “Gridiron” area. Other suggestions for regulating home size included limiting the size of homes to 4,000 square feet or less, while others commented there should be no new development.

#### **Other**

Other comments regarding community character focused on landscaping and septic systems. Participants commented that the lack of landscape maintenance by neighbors can impact views, while another comment suggested that septic systems should not be used as a factor to limit home size. Further, comments suggested extending the sewer line to commercial properties along Harbor Drive.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

#### **Vegetation Removal**

Some participants commented on the issue of vegetation removal. There was concern that the lack of regular mowing and removal of weeds and other vegetation along informal walking areas may become a fire safety hazard. There is a desire to bring back vegetation clearing efforts that had been periodically done by agencies or community organizations such as the California Conservation Corps, Fire Department, Black Point Improvement Club, and neighbors. In addition, there were concerns that some property owners, especially absentee landlords and owners of vacant lots, do not always clear brush as needed. Additional enforcement was suggested.

#### **Fire Evacuation Routes**

Participants expressed interested in establishing alternative fire evacuation routes in addition to those based on the Novato Fire District evacuation drills, which include Bay Canyon, Manzanita/Phillip Terrace, Grandview, and Day Island. Participants noted that it is important to have more than one way out in case of an emergency. For example, Grandview to Harbor Drive is the only way out of the Gridiron area.

Participants shared their ideas about potential additional evacuation routes. Stone Tree Golf Course provides options, including landing space for a medevac helicopter. The fire road around the periphery of Norton and Grandview Avenue is good for biking. Although Channel Road is a dead end it could be made into a dirt road for getting out of the area in two directions. However, the locked gate by the railroad tracks prevents vehicle passage, but pedestrians and bicyclists could easily pass through.

There was also a suggestion that residents could evacuate from the Gridiron area into the marsh areas. Further, the informal footpaths should be maintained since they can be hard to find when they become overgrown and choked with vegetation. A participant noted that the Novato Fire Department will conduct a free vegetation fire safety inspection of your property, and another commented that the Y-shaped fire truck turnaround at the end of Norton is beneficial to the community since the area's topography prevents the installation of cul-de-sacs.

### **Locked Gates**

The several locked gates on Bay Canyon, Grandview, and the entrance to Day Island continue to be an issue for evacuation. In addition, the gates hinder or prevent access for those pushing strollers, using a wheelchair, or bicyclists.

### **Other**

Other comments focused on the topics of fire sprinklers and illegal dumping. It was suggested that sprinklers should be installed for all additions, remodels, new units in the Wildland Urban Interface. However, the cost of installation for new fire sprinklers should be limited to the price of the equipment and engineering. Participants also expressed concern about the dumping of garbage on Harbor Drive near Crest Road and from the boat launch to the channel. Additional enforcement and signage is needed to discourage illegal dumping.

## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE**

### **Most Utilized Areas**

The most popular areas in the community for recreation include Day Island, Rush Creek and Deer Island Open Space Preserves, and neighborhood streets such as Crest, School, Grandview, and Iolanthus. Residents use the bike lane along Atherton Avenue and enjoy walking on paths and roads. Residents also visit the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve and the boat launch. Participants commented that the community is unique and many chose to live here because of the area's natural beauty, air quality, micro climate, wildlife, and abundance of trees.

### **Suggested Improvements**

Participants were asked what suggested improvements they would like to see. Suggestions included improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to recreation and natural areas, designated walking and bicycle paths, and roadside paths that are wide and smooth enough for walking and jogging. Specific suggested improvements include a walk through/bike access at the gate on Bay Canyon, and continuation of the trail along Atherton Avenue from Rush Creek to Olive Avenue. The trail should be designed for all age groups and allow for dog walking, equestrians, and bicycles. In addition, access for mountain biking should be allowed on all the trails in the Rush Creek Open Space Preserve. It was also suggested that the County should consider purchasing the 28 acres behind June Lane and Bahia Hill as Open Space, since this area is used extensively by residents. There was also interest in having a public dock accessible to the river for all.

### **Community Park**

Participants were asked if the community plan should encourage the development of a community park, mini pocket park, or a playground. Responses were divided; those responding with "yes" suggested acquiring the approximately 25 acre undeveloped parcel located behind June Court for open space, or adding a community park adjacent to the boat launch. These improvements could be funded through

additional taxes approved by voters. However, others did not know how to fund such improvements, although many residents have grandchildren living or often visiting who would use such facilities. Those responding “no” commented that the community is already park-like and think improvements would diminish the rural setting and make it seem more urban. Others expressed a need for more information, or concern about how a park or other improvements would be funded.

### **Other**

With regards to paper streets, some comments noted that paper streets should not be abandoned since they serve as wildlife and habitat corridors, as well as accessways within the community. A few comments noted that no additional types of parks were needed at the boat launch.

## **CIRCULATION, ROAD, AND BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK**

### **Most Utilized Bicycle and Pedestrian Areas**

Participants were asked where they most often bike and/or walk in the community. Respondents reported that they like to walk and bike to and around Day Island and the Rush Creek and Deer Island Open Space Preserves, along Atherton Avenue, Grandview, Beattie and Crest, and along Harbor Drive to the boat dock.

### **Suggested Improvements**

Participants were asked their suggestions on how to improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation in the neighborhood. It should be noted that many of the comments from the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space section are relevant and overlap with comments here. The following needs were identified: provide periodic street sweeping on bike lanes on Atherton Avenue and on other roads; provide a sidewalk or designated pedestrian walkway on Atherton Avenue, Olive Avenue, Greenview and Harbor Drive to improve access to the boat launch; provide a walkway along the marsh; and improve bike and pedestrian access on Bay Canyon Road by unlocking the gate.

### **Road Maintenance**

Several comments addressed the issue of road maintenance. For example, it was noted that property owners on County-maintained roads shouldn't have to pay for maintenance or construction of private roads, and suggested that property owners on private roads should form their own maintenance or assessment district to fund improvements. In addition, new construction or substantial remodel of homes on private streets should require a road fund established during the permitting process. Another commented that the railroad crossing at Harbor Drive and Grandview needs to be improved because the track timbers have rotted away and the surface transition from pavement to the track is no longer smooth but bumpy. Another suggested if the County could provide assistance in the upkeep of Channel Drive.

### **Parking**

Parking should be restricted to one side of County-maintained roads so that fire trucks can pass. No off-road parking for environmental reasons like soil compaction and erosion. On Anton Way, parking should be allowed on curb side only facing uphill, curb tire. Parked cars should not encroach upon private property. People who live on private roads should park where they live and not on publicly-maintained roads.

### **Speed control**

Speeding was also mentioned as an issue, particularly on School Road. Suggestions include adding signage and speed bumps to encourage motorists to slow down on School Road, Grandview, and Harbor Drive. Similarly, there was a suggestion to identify wildlife corridor areas along busy roads, such as Atherton Avenue and School Road, and reduce traffic speeds accordingly. Someone expressed appreciation that the County has improved Crest and School roads; however these improvements appear to have increased speeds and, since there are several blind corners, there could be an increased chance of an accident.

## **Other**

There was concern that property owners along H Lane have fences and landscaping that are encroaching into the right of way, making pedestrian access dangerous. Another commented that it is a challenge being surrounded by the City of Novato with respect to coordination of road maintenance. For example, portions of H Lane are under jurisdiction of the City of Novato while the other half is the responsibility of the County. It was asked if the County is working with the City on the update to this plan.

## **VILLAGE CENTER LAND USE**

The Village Center area consists of the commercial and residential uses along Harbor Drive that are zoned VCR (Village Commercial/Residential). Some have suggested that certain types of uses should be encouraged. These include:

- Agriculture and Open Space, such as plant nurseries (without on-site sales)
- Recreation and Education, such as small child day-care/small family day-care homes, theatres and meeting halls (for a community center)
- Residential uses, such as single family dwellings
- Retail, such as grocery stores and restaurants (including cafes), second hand stores, antique retail stores; and studios for art, dance, music, photography, etc.

Participants were asked if the community plan should encourage these types of uses. Of those who provided feedback at the topic station and via survey, approximately half supported these uses, while half did not. Other comments included: "Probably won't happen because it's too out of the way to attract business"; "Small grocery store is really needed"; and "Park benches along pathways on Grandview."

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT AND MOVEMENT CORRIDORS**

Protecting wildlife habitat and movement corridors was brought up as an important issue that should be addressed in the community plan since wildlife is part of the area's natural and rural character.

Participants were asked to select their top three choices from several possible criteria that could be used to guide future development the community in order to protect wildlife corridors. The top two choices were:

- Development projects should minimize impacts to wildlife habitat and movement corridors. Avoid fence types, roads, structures, and outdoor lighting that would significantly inhibit or obstruct wildlife movement, especially access to water. Wildlife-friendly fencing is encouraged."
- Discourage the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides.

One comment suggested that a section of Bay View between Grandview and Cedar is fenced off, preventing a wildlife movement corridor.