

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

#### LOCATION & EXISTING BUILDINGS

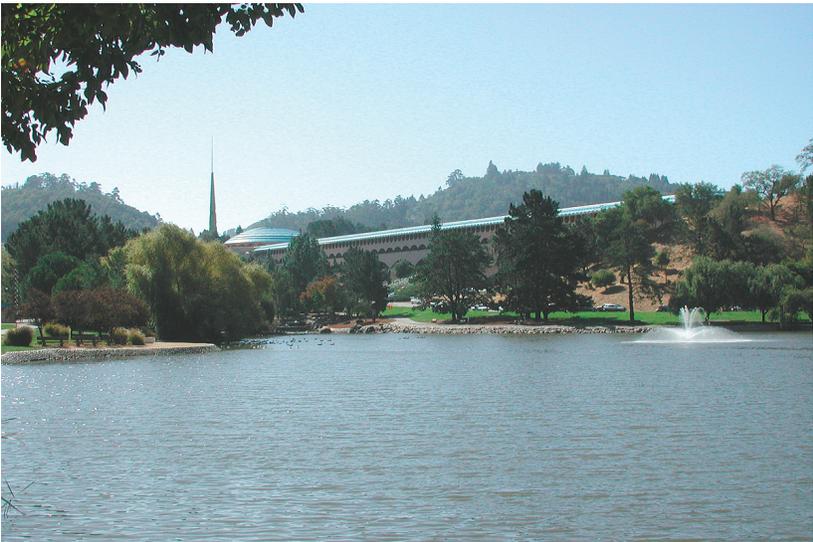
The Marin County Civic Center is located in the City of San Rafael, east of Highway 101 and twenty miles north of San Francisco. The approximately one hundred and sixty acre site is varied in type and form. Gallinas Creek runs along the northern end of the campus and links to wetlands that lead eastward to the bay. The southern end of the site is an oak woodland landscape of rolling hills, mature trees, and seasonal grasses. The San Pedro ridge frames the site to the southeast.



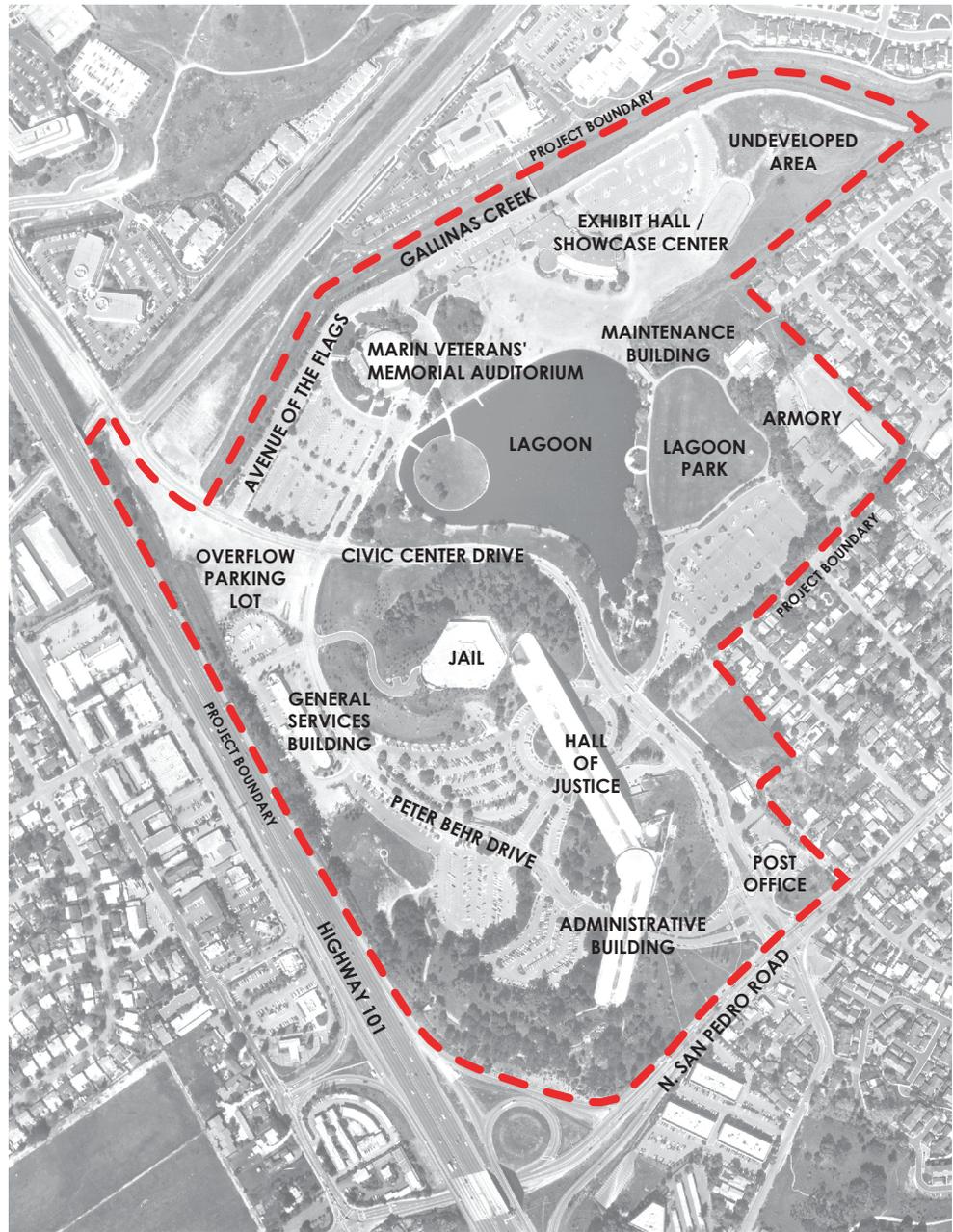
Marin County Civic Center - 1970

The first major civic structure built on site was the four story Administration Building which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright before his death in 1959. The building was completed under the direction of architects William Wesley Peters and Aaron Green of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in 1962. The second structure at the Civic Center, the five story Hall of Justice, was completed in 1970. The U.S. Post Office was also designed by Wright and completed in 1962.

The site hosts other structures as well. The General Services Building along Highway 101 was completed in 1971. The Marin Veterans' Memorial Auditorium was designed by William Wesley Peters and Aaron Green, the same architectural heritage as the Administration Building and the Hall of Justice, and completed in 1971. The Exhibit Hall was designed by the Taliesin Associated Architects, led by Anthony Puttnam and was completed in 1976.



Marin County Civic Center - 2004



**PROJECT BOUNDARY**



Marin County Civic Center - 1970



Marin County Civic Center - 2004

Both firms are from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. In 1960 Marin County leased the southeastern edge of the site to the State of California for a National Guard Armory. The 99-year lease agreement will expire in 2059.

The Marin Center property was deeded to the County several years ago by the State of California who originally purchased the eighty acres specifically to be home to the annual Marin County Fair, which moved to the site in 1972. There are no known land use restrictions on the site as long as the Marin County Fair is accommodated.



Marin County Fair 2003, Photo by Charles Benton

### PREVIOUS STUDIES

Over the last 30+ years various plans and studies have been completed to guide the County's stewardship of the site. These include the following:

- *Marin County Civic Center Master Plan: 1972 - 1990*, Taliesin Associated Architects of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, June 1972
- *Schematic Master Plans: Grading, Utilities, & Planting*, Taliesin Associated Architects of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, December 1974
- *Conceptual Landscape Plan for Marin County Civic Center and Marin Center*, Department of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services, Marin County, by Steve Petterle, August 2000
- *County of Marin Facilities Master Plan*, Gensler, April 2002
- *Preliminary Site Analysis Report for Civic Center Expansion*, Heller Manus Architects, March 2003

This project will review and update previous studies to equip the County with design guidelines that incorporate environmental protection and land use planning considerations for future development on-site.

## 2.2 Master Design Guidelines Goals & Objectives

### POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SITES

A key component of the Master Design Guidelines will reevaluate and analyze previous development site recommendations and site capacities to identify additional land use criteria that should be considered in subsequent designs.

Issues to be discussed for site development include the following:

- County facility needs
- Traffic impacts
- Parking capacities
- Visual impacts
- Possible development sites
- Site utilities

Based on the above, the Guidelines will outline site selection criterion that the County can use for projects in the future.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Master Design Guidelines will also define design parameters for the following elements:

- Site organization to include views, parking locations and capacities, and traffic
- Buildings and architecture
- Landscape and site elements to include planting, irrigation, paving, site furniture, riparian environments, lagoon, park areas, streetscapes, parking lot design, lighting, and signage.

### PRINCIPLES

Several over-arching principles will apply to all of the recommendations in the Master Design Guidelines.

- *Sustainability.* The County of Marin has set forth a policy to honor sustainable design principles, as described in the Draft Marin Countywide Plan, February 2004. New development at the Civic Center should strive to meet or exceed an environmental performance level based on the LEED™ Gold standard (from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System), subject to fiscal and programming constraints. These Guidelines identify and encourage green design concepts and practices.

- **Access.** The County of Marin is committed to ensuring that no person with a disability is discriminated against in any program, service or activity. Any altered, remodeled or newly constructed facility on the Civic Center campus will be accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. To achieve these practices the County requires compliance with all federal, state and local laws, regulations and ordinances.
- **Historical Consideration.** In 1991 eighty-one acres of the Marin County Civic Center site were designated as a National Historic Landmark. These guidelines will address the County's responsibility with regard to the site's unique status, and will provide the County with guidance regarding potential future developments and site improvements.
- **Strategies for the Future.** The Marin County Civic Center has amply served County residents for 30+ years and will continue to do so for decades to come. These Guidelines will help the County plan for the future while maintaining the Civic Center's integrity and central role in Marin County culture and government.
- **Commitment to Children, Families and Seniors.** The County is committed to providing community, recreation and cultural resources for all Marin County residents. These guidelines help to ensure that current facilities and any possible future development will be of the highest quality and accessible to all.

The County is also committed to the ongoing enhancement of security on the campus for employees and visitors alike. These guidelines assume that security is a critical responsibility of the County and that it will be thoroughly addressed in any possible future development projects. In addition, the campus will continue to be a cultural centerpiece for the county and a gathering place for all to enjoy.

### **2.3 Marin County Civic Center Master Plan of 1972 - 1990**

Fundamental to the organization of the Marin County Civic Center is the idea that the entire campus, while made up of various governmental, cultural and recreational components, must nevertheless be experienced as a composite whole. The Civic Center and Fairgrounds form an integrated complex of related elements on an informal park-like setting that is visually appealing and accessible to all.

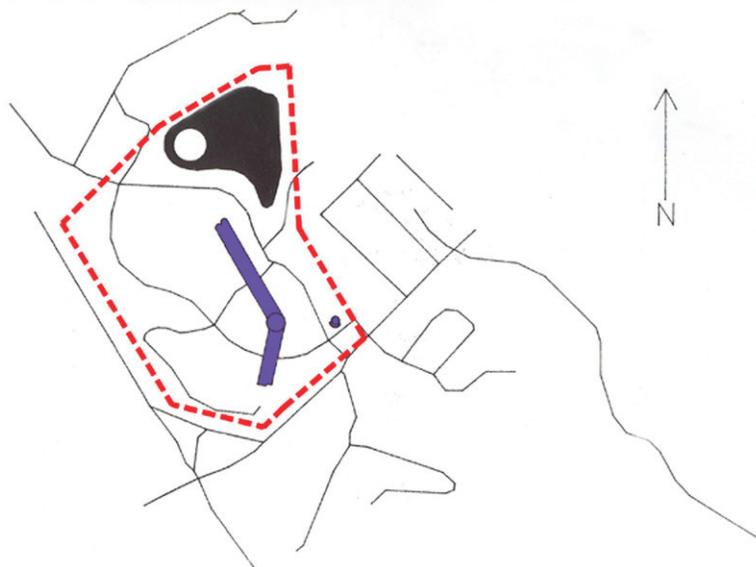
As expressed in the *Marin County Civic Center Master Plan of 1972 – 1990*, it is the intent of the County to maintain its open space heritage while providing for future growth. This sentiment is best summarized by the criteria established by the County of Marin for use in the development of this master plan:

- The site is to be treated as a composite whole. Any potential conflict between governmental activities and recreational-cultural activities must be resolved without interference or dilution of either.
- Beyond identifying known and fixed items, flexibility to accommodate future developments is necessary.
- New buildings must respect and enhance natural land formations. Extent of building and land coverage must be limited.
- Variations in contemporary design for future building stages, not incompatible with present buildings, shall be considered.
- The possibility of grouping and combining new buildings as against constructing isolated elements should be thoroughly explored.

Introduced over thirty years ago, the stated criteria continue to provide a basis for current and future planning efforts and serve as the underpinnings for these guidelines.

## 2.4 National Historic Landmark Status

National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture. The Marin County Civic Center received its landmark designation



**DIAGRAM OF HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY**

as an historic district on July 17, 1991. The following is a summary of the landmark application describing the extent of the historic district and the significance of the contributing resources.

## BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the eighty-one acre landmark site extends from North San Pedro Road to the south, U.S. Highway 101 to the west, edge of the lagoon to the north, and an adjoining residential neighborhood to the east.

Within the landmark designation, the Civic Center is classified as part of the Modern Movement and is an expression of Wright's "organic architecture." The contributing resources of the district include the Administration Building and Hall of Justice complex and the U.S. Post Office building along with the parking areas, roadways and lagoon, that compose the landscape setting.

## MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER

As indicated in the landmark application, the Marin Civic Center government complex is the last major work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his largest constructed project. It is composed of two buildings, the 580-foot long Administration Building and the 880-foot long Hall of Justice, which are set at a slight angle to each other and joined together by a central rotunda. The rounded ends of the two buildings are built into the side of the hills, where they are not merely placed on parcels of land, but the buildings are integrally connected to the landscape allowing the roadways to flow under and through the buildings.

Extending from the domed rotunda are repetitive arches that exhibit a light screen-like character and create a horizontal rhythm that recalls Roman aqueduct construction such as the Pont du Gard in Nimes. The screen of arches helps modulate the daylight. Adjacent to the rotunda is a terrace at the end of which springs a 172-foot triangular spire that complements the rhythmic, low-lying structures beyond.

Both the four-story Administration Building (completed in 1962) and the five-story Hall of Justice (completed in 1970) are constructed of a combination of steel with poured concrete and pre-cast/pre-stressed concrete elements. The floor system uses pre-cast/pre-stressed double-tee floor members. Vertical supports are primarily small-diameter, extra-strength steel columns with pre-cast, elliptically shaped, concrete covers. The roof system is composed of a series of pre-cast concrete trusses supporting a thin, barrel-arched shell of reinforced concrete. Pre-cast units of ornament adorn the roof to help mask construction irregularities. Although intended to have a golden color, the roof is painted a sky blue color since no gold paint or coating had been developed at the time to withstand tarnishing. The walls are of an intensified sand/beige color to compensate for the fading that would naturally occur over time.

The public enters the Administration Building from the center of the archway over the entrance drive. An ornate gold anodized gate leads to the interior of the building. Each of the interior floors have open light wells that increase in width from bottom to top to allow natural light to pour down from the roof. Though



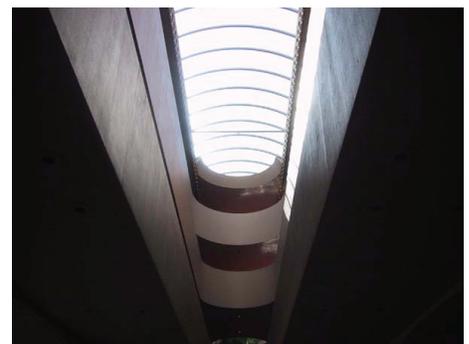
View of Administration Building



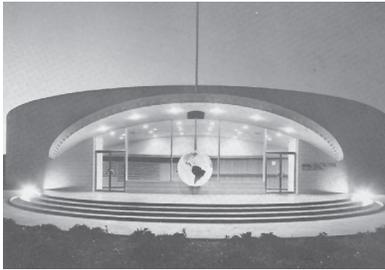
Pont du Gard in Nimes



Entrance to Administration Building



Interior light wells



View of U.S. Post Office with original globe



View of U.S. Post Office today

intended to be open to the outside, it was deemed necessary to cover the roof openings and barrel-vaulted skylights were subsequently installed.

### UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

The U.S. Post Office (completed in 1962), located near the main entrance to the grounds at North San Pedro Road, is Wright's sole federal commission. The one-story, elliptically shaped building has a flat roof hidden by a parapet and is constructed of reinforced concrete masonry block painted the same color as the Civic Center complex. A broad, round-arched canopy of cast concrete is cantilevered from the façade above the glass entry wall. Originally, a large plastic globe of the world was mounted on a pole centered halfway inside and halfway outside of the building. However, as the plastic deteriorated over time, the globe was removed. The County owns the property under the Post Office (the lease expires in 2012) and is committed to the preservation and restoration of its historic resources. It encourages the restoration of the post office to its original form.

### NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Not all buildings in the eighty-one acre landmark site are included as part of the historic designation, and are classified "non-contributing resources." The Standards of Treatment do not apply to these buildings. The four non-contributing resources on the site include: 1) The County General Services Building near the west edge of the site along Highway 101, 2) the Marin Veterans'

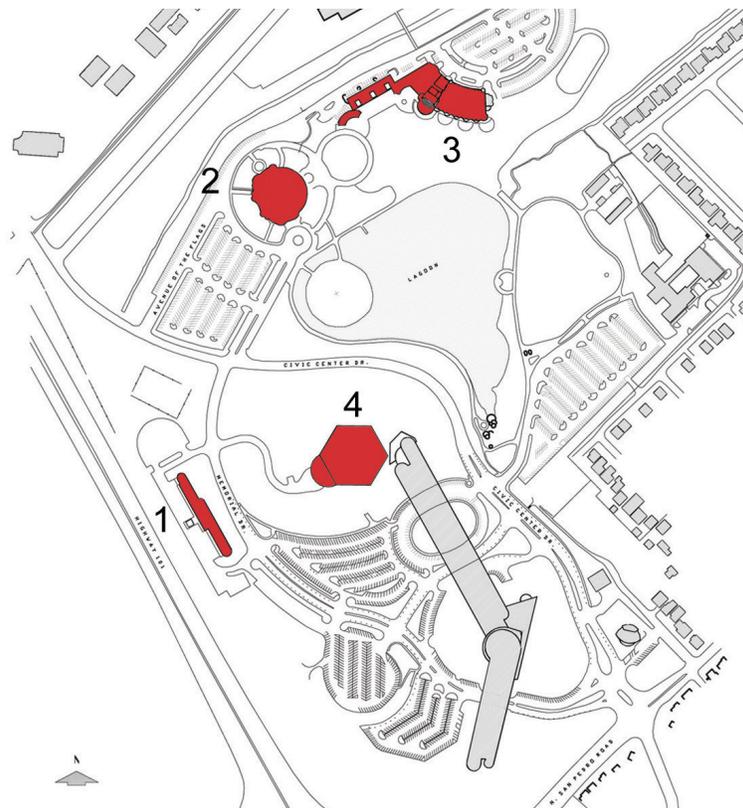


DIAGRAM OF NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES



1. County General Services Building



2. Marin Veterans' Memorial Auditorium



3. Exhibit Hall



4. County Jail

Memorial Auditorium near the north edge of the lagoon, 3) the Exhibit Hall Building at the north portion of the site that includes the fairgrounds and associated storage buildings, and 4) the Marin County Jail situated in the hill adjacent to the Civic Center and generally concealed from view. Also on the Civic Center Campus is a fire station located near the Post Office. The fire station is maintained and operated by the City of San Rafael, but the property under the station is owned by the County. The County leases this land to the San Rafael; the current agreement expires in 2006.

### 2.5 The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards provide a reference for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction projects related to historic resources such as the Marin Civic Center site. As a National Historic Landmark, all treatments undertaken within the historic district of the Marin Civic Center should be approached with sensitivity and in accordance with the following ten principles:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

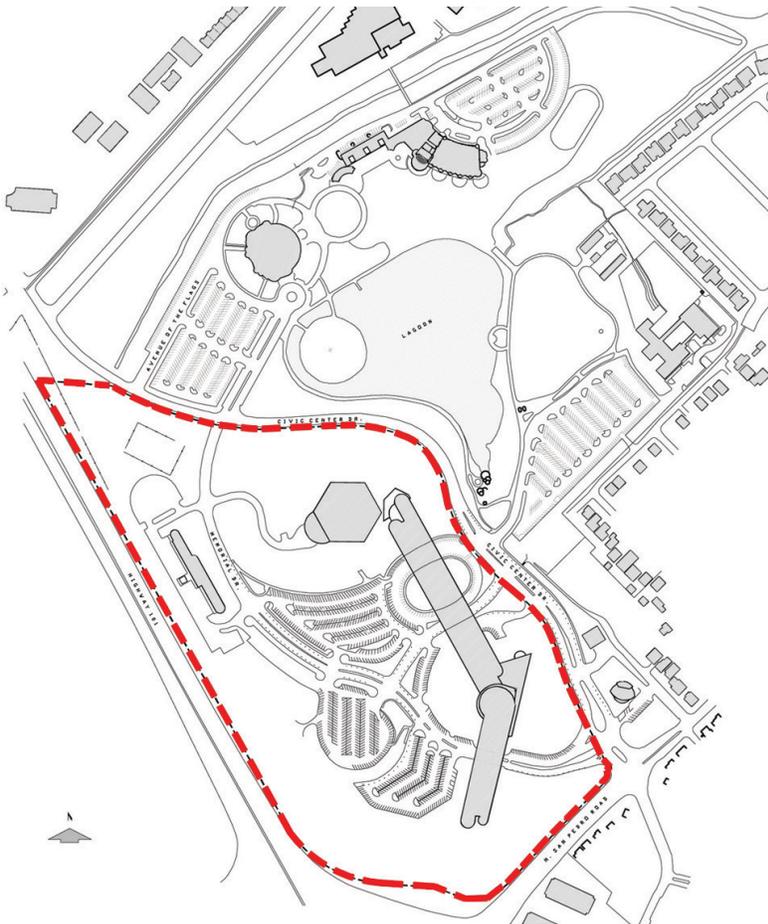
## **2.6 Marin Civic Center Open Space Ordinance**

Approved in 1992, the intent of the Marin Center Open Space ordinance is to preserve the aesthetic quality of the Frank Lloyd Wright Civic Center buildings and grounds by preventing the construction of any building at the Marin County Civic Center grounds without the prior approval by a majority vote of the County electorate. The Civic Center grounds is defined as the land bordered by North San Pedro Road to the south, U.S. High-

way 101 to the west, the railroad right of way to the north, and Civic Center Drive to the east.

This ordinance does not, however, prevent or impede the County from: maintaining, repairing, restoring, or rebuilding the existing Civic Center building; maintaining, repairing, altering, or adding at-grade parking, pedestrian, or playground facilities; maintaining, altering, improving, or adding landscaping, utilities, or fencing; approving or constructing minor structures that do not exceed two hundred and fifty square feet and that are incidental to the operation of the Civic Center facilities; or making interior changes or modifications to the Civic Center building. Furthermore, it does not prevent or impede the placement on the Civic Center grounds of temporary structures for the purposes of seasonal activities such as Christmas tree sales and the County fair, and other temporary activities such as the weekly farmer's market.

Projects undertaken within the Civic Center grounds (as shown within the dashed line of the diagram below) are therefore subject to the requirements of this ordinance in acknowledging the Civic Center's open space heritage.



**DIAGRAM OF OPEN SPACE ORDINANCE BOUNDARY**