



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
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SUBJECT: Santa Venetia Community Plan and Planning Commission request for direction on Community Plan Update Strategy

Dear Board Members,

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider the Draft Santa Venetia Community Plan and provide direction to the Planning Commission regarding the intended strategy for updating community plans and particularly whether the scope of community plan updates in general should place a greater emphasis on creating more specific development policies for key sites within community planning areas, including site-specific land use, density, and design standards.

BACKGROUND:

In 2012, your Board adopted a new approach to the preparation and updating of community plans referred to as the Community Plan Update Strategy (Attachment 1). As described in the document, the intent of the strategy is to establish a more efficient and effective community plan process which focuses on the implementation of Countywide Plan policies at a local level, where applicable, as well as any unique planning issues not already addressed by existing policies and programs. In order to allow consideration of Marin County's numerous community plans within a reasonable time period, the Strategy anticipated that the community plan update process should be kept to a timeline of approximately 12 to 18 months.

In early 2013, the community of Santa Venetia was selected as a priority candidate for a new community plan under the new Strategy due in part to the absence of an existing community plan for this planning area. Staff began meeting with an Advisory Committee of residents appointed by Supervisor Adams in May 2013. Over the course of 18 months, staff worked with Advisory Committee members as well as the broader community toward development of a new draft community plan for Santa Venetia, which is provided as Attachment 2.

As noted in the Community Plan Update Strategy, guidance on land use, density, and design are appropriate topics for a community plan to address. However, it became clear during the plan update process that achieving community consensus on specific development issues in Santa Venetia would not be possible within the

planned time frame, particularly given the contentious nature of development in general and the high level of sensitivity surrounding “key sites” in this community. Instead, the draft Santa Venetia Community Plan focuses on identifying issues of importance to the community, summarizing existing policies and programs most relevant to those issues, and acknowledging community concerns regarding key sites and properties.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The Planning Commission considered the draft Santa Venetia Community Plan on October 27, 2014. While Commission members found the plan to be attractive, easy to read, and informative, the Commission was unanimous in its concern that the document did not adequately address development potential and the community’s vision for several key properties in the community. Specifically, the Commission felt that the community plan should provide guidance regarding appropriate land uses, density ranges, and development policies for properties including:

- Oxford Valley - vacant 28 acre parcel located at the end of Oxford Drive
- Marin Jewish Community Campus - a 13 acre religious, educational, and recreational campus on N. San Pedro Road
- MacPhail’s School - 10 acre San Rafael City Schools site on Vendola Drive
- Buck’s Launching – 33 acre boat launch & storage facility on Gallinas Creek
- Boyd Ranch – 97 acre ranch adjoining China Camp State Park
- Commercially-zoned properties, including on N. San Pedro Road across from the Civic Center

Additionally, there were suggestions from individual Commissioners that the community plan should provide community-specific policy direction regarding flood control, sea level rise, and resource protection, address the community’s capacity to accommodate additional traffic, and identify possible affordable housing sites. Overall, Commissioners agreed that a community plan should be more than an “informational” or “existing conditions” document, and that community plan updates should not be undertaken unless the process results in a document which incorporates land use, density, and design guidance that adequately expresses the community’s vision with respect to future development in their community.

SUMMARY

As the first plan developed under the Community Plan Update Strategy, the Santa Venetia Community Plan may serve as guidance for future planning efforts. Accordingly, the Planning Commission decided that, prior to making a formal recommendation to the Board on the Draft Plan, it was both important and timely that their concerns be reported to your Board along with a request for clarification of the role of community plans and your Board’s expectations on the appropriate level of guidance that should be provided in community plans on land use, density, and design.

SIGNATURE:

Reviewed by:

Christine Gimmler
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Director

Attachment 1 - Community Plan Update Strategy
Attachment 2 – Draft Santa Venetia Community Plan