



**CITY OF FORT BRAGG**

416 N. FRANKLIN, FORT BRAGG, CA 95437  
PHONE 707/961-2823 FAX 707/961-2802

---

---

**COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT**

**DATE: APRIL 27, 2021**

**TO: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**FROM: SARAH MCCORMICK, HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Receive Report Regarding Improvements to Guest House Museum Property to Accommodate Public Gatherings in the Central Business District as an Amenity to Support Economic Development in the Central Business District**

---

**BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW:**

The mission of the City's Coastal/Inland General Plan is to preserve and enhance the small town character and natural beauty that make the City a place where people want to live and visit, and to improve the economic diversity of the City to ensure that it has a strong and resilient economy which supports its residents.

There are several factors that impact the value of a neighborhood. For example, assets such as parks, open space, transportation networks, shopping, economic opportunity, and simply appearance are a handful of elements which impact the perceived and real value of neighborhoods. In an effort to revitalize the CBD, Council is considering investing in a public location for public gatherings; an amenity for locals and tourists to enjoy and one that enhances the downtown experience.

City staff is currently applying for competitive grant funding through the State's Rural Recreation and Tourism Program for such a project. If awarded, this project could potentially add a \$200,000 to \$3 million community asset, which would come to fruition in the coming years. While working toward this vision, Council may choose to consider a smaller project, utilizing City owned property that could meet the need for a public gathering space in the meantime – The Guest House Museum.

The Guest House was built in 1892 by the Fort Bragg Redwood Company as a private residence for the company owners and the property was registered as California Historic Landmark No. 615 on July 24, 1957. Georgia Pacific donated the property to the City in 1985 and the Fort Bragg – Mendocino Coast Historical Society assumed responsibility in 1999; using the Guest House Museum as its headquarters.

Both the building and the grounds it sits on are an asset to the City and its downtown location. In addition to the physical assets, it boosts incredible cultural value which reside within the artifacts, stories and community members that preserve Fort Bragg's history. It also highlights a future of our town that embraces the environment, with bee friendly and pollinator landscaping installed through the efforts of community members affiliated with the Bee City, USA movement.

Building on these existing assets could have valuable ripple effects. There is interest in a walking historical tour and walking art/mural tour to encourage folks to wander downtown streets and alleys. This could be a prime location for directional signage to entice visitors to explore Redwood Avenue or make their way to the Wiggly Giggly Park and library. There is also an interest in having a bandstand of sorts for live music and other performances or ceremonies.

One of the issues with the location involves the courtyard that sits between the Guest House Museum and Town Hall. This area is tucked away, creating a somewhat private environment to loiter, which has become a nuisance and safety concern for those walking along the sidewalk and wanting to utilize the public restrooms at Town Hall. Steps are being taken to address these issues - a conversation is pending at the Public Works and Facilities Committee in regard to upgrading the restroom facilities, and the Public Safety Committee is discussing how to implement regular foot-patrol downtown to discourage nuisances and encourage a sense of safety.

Improvements to the courtyard and Guest House Museum might be included as part of the plan to upgrade restroom facilities at Town Hall. These improvements could include simply rearranging benches and creating pathway connection or something more complex such as constructing a platform or stair case. For example:

The two benches and vegetation along the sidewalk could be removed to open the courtyard to Main Street, which would make it more accessible, remove some of the privacy and bring a better sense of safety. The benches could be moved to the Guest House Museum grounds for additional seating.





A meandering pathway could lead from the courtyard through the Guest House Museum grounds along the northern edge; a staircase built along the south side of the restrooms.



There are several locations suitable as a stage for music, performances, speeches and ceremonies, including the existing platform in front, or constructing a deck in the rear of the property with views toward the ocean.



**RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider improvements to the Guest House Museum property to accommodate public gatherings and enhance the Central Business District, provide feedback and direction to staff, and/or request additional information.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None.

**NOTIFICATIONS:**

City of Fort Bragg "Notify Me" Subscriber Lists: Fort Bragg Downtown Businesses; Economic Development Planning; Tourism & Marketing