

Paoli, Diana

From: potrero_enterprises@mcn.org
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 10:11 AM
To: City Clerk; Whippy, Isaac
Cc: Cherry Brill Alena; potrero_enterprises@mcn.org
Subject: Mill Site Development Comments
Attachments: Fort Bragg Community Needs in Relation to Mill Site Development.docx

We attended the public meeting to restart the discussions between the Skunk train and FTB City last month and wished to weigh in on some of our opinions.

Many thanks for your efforts!

Rick and Cherry

Fort Bragg Community Needs in Relation to Mill Site Development

Cherry Elliott and Rick Alena are Fort Bragg residents living near the proposed development and who are most interested in a development that benefits the community and allows future growth.

Fort Bragg Community Needs should drive Mill Site development and associated efforts

- The community is isolated geographically and has limits on water. These factors limit increased population and even temporary (tourist) accommodations.
 - Transportation constraints
 - Water constraints
- The community is in need of transportation improvements
 - Within Fort Bragg (public transport is limited, Hwy 1 is always busy)
 - To surrounding cities (Ukiah and Willits are major health care providers)
- The community will benefit from a more diverse economy.
- The community is in need of affordable housing.
- The community is in need of jobs that pay higher than minimum wage
- The community needs jobs and activities that appeal to young people
- The community needs better health care in Fort Bragg. Current trend is to move health services to Ukiah and Willits.
- The community needs to maintain its focus on outdoor activity and nature. How many people come here for the fresh air, mountains and seacoast? They all need accommodations and food which is currently a major economic driver for this City.
- The community needs to attract events that fit the character of the region, its residents and visitors.

Mill Site Development Produces the Following General Benefits and Costs

- Addresses certain economic growth approaches for the City of Fort Bragg
 - Local Jobs
 - Diverse business
- Addresses housing growth as well
- Could potentially address transportation between Fort Bragg and Willits
- Does not adequately address transportation issues, particularly increased traffic in the Hwy 1 Main Street corridor
- Does not adequately address integration of the new businesses and building construction with the existing Fort Bragg businesses and infrastructure.
- The City of Fort Bragg will see significant new costs for roads, water and sewer due to this development. What are the cost estimates and who will pay for them?

From: [City of Fort Bragg](#)
To: [Paoli, Diana](#)
Subject: Email contact from Fort Bragg, CA
Date: Monday, March 10, 2025 1:03:05 PM

Message submitted from the <Fort Bragg, CA> website.

Site Visitor Name: Jessica Ehlers
Site Visitor Email: jessica@jessicaehlers.com

March 10, 2025

Dear Fort Bragg City Council,

I am writing to give support of the development of the Georgia Pacific site. I have lived in Fort Bragg for 40 years. I am a daughter, a wife and mother among other things. I have lived here for 40 years.

In my academic and professional life, I have studied things that contribute to mental illness and addiction. People who don't have places to live and meaningful work are at much higher risk for complications of both. I believe we are already seeing the consequences of this situation in our community. It's up to you to decide how we will move forward by building up the infrastructure with our town for us, our children and the children who will come after.

I don't think I am overstating that since the loss of logging and fishing, Fort Bragg has been contracting at an ever-faster rate. I hope, Dear Council- that we say yes to the opportunity to develop into something more sustainable that will fortify our capacity to live here.

Sincerely, Jessica Ehlers

Jessica Ehlers, LCSW
335 E Fir Street
Fort Bragg CA 95437
(707) 357-4019

From: [Jacob Patterson](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- 3/10/25 CC Mtg., Continued Mill Site Workshop
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 2:26:23 PM

City Council,

As you may recall, I have consistently advocated for a development agreement process to address the various community and landowner concerns about future development on the Mill Site. I still believe such a process is the right path forward; however, after the first workshop meeting, I am concerned that it isn't being handled well and might be a little off track (or off-the-rails, if you prefer a train theme). Like many others, I have been concerned that the substantive discussions about this process have been going on behind closed doors with limited public participation only to be presented for our collective review after a lot of controversial details have been addressed only privately

My fears were compounded when I learned that the team working on this process is already compromised by apparent conflicts of interest and disproportionate participation from land-owning parties with their own agenda, including the head of the Noyo Center's board now working as part of the so-called neutral consultant team jointly hired by the City and the Railway. It is entirely appropriate for a stakeholder to advocate for their own interests and objectives through the public planning process but they shouldn't be involved in crafting what is being presented as the City's work and should participate on an even footing with all public participants. Likewise, for the railway itself. It is fine and appropriate for them to advocate for their entity's objectives but who is looking out for the needs and overall concerns of the community and the public at large? The City should be representing our interests but I am not seeing enough of that so far. (It may be there in some way, it just isn't clear to me that it is the case.)

To illustrate, we have the first draft of the land use map component of the illustrative plan and it included details that are aligned with the private proposals of the interested landowners but not the community consensus or even past council direction. Two prominent examples are the conceptual layout of the proposed Noyo Center, which includes changes to the air strip that were already rejected outright as well as changes to the access road to the sewer plant that were also not supported by the City Council. Similarly, the map shows the central mill pond in OUE remaining in place and subdivided into two ponds, which has been proposed by the railway (and will coincidentally remove the existing dam around the pond from the oversight of the California Department of Water Resources' (DWR's) Division of Safety of Dams (DSOE). There is broad community objection to that proposal as well and yet it shows up on the map paired with the daylighting on only Maple Creek leaving off similar daylighting efforts of Alder Creek. Why are these private proposals from the interested landowners directly participating in the closed door discussions, which also have not been conceptually approved by the City Council on behalf of the community, been included in the draft illustrative plan proposals, particularly the specific aspects that have already been rejected? That shouldn't be the case, IMO.

Anyway, I think a development agreement process is the best way to move forward and resolve the underlying concerns and disputes but that process needs to be objective, neutral and focused on the overall community good, not the private interests of involved interested parties. So far, I am not seeing that but I am hopeful that if/when we continue with this

process, we keep our focus on the good of the overall community and not just on those with the loudest voices or the deepest pockets.

On a related note, I think it is important to recognize that abandoning a cooperative development agreement approach in favor of litigation followed by usual planning processes would likely delay any meaningful development on the Mill Site for another decade. Why should we have to wait many more years to get started with what most view as very necessary growth (at least if done thoughtfully) to battle it out in court when we can resolve our underlying concerns through the flexible development agreement process? We shouldn't if that is what is at stake. That said, this process needs to be managed well and that appears to need improvement before people can feel comfortable with this cooperative rather than adversarial direction.

Regards,

--Jacob

February 27, 2025

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City of Fort Bragg
Finance Department

Dear City Councilmembers and City Manager,

At the Millsite Workshop the other night, the maps and presentations of possible development plans were certainly impressive and full of hope. There are so many possibilities, it was exciting to see.

I listened to the many comments and responses that were made, which covered a wide range of suggestions and concerns. My own concern, shared by many others, is whether any negotiated settlement of the current paused lawsuit will require all millsite development to follow the same rules that any other development in town has to follow. That also seems to have been the crux of the lawsuit.

When that question, in many forms, was brought up, the response was that the Mendocino Railroad had provided assurances, even in writing, that they would, indeed, abide by those rules, except for in those areas designated as specifically railroad related and thus federally governed. It is my concern that any verbal or written statement could be, in the future, disregarded by the invocation of the railroad's federal status on any millsite area they chose to expand into. Trust is one thing, but circumstances can change. Mergers or acquisitions can happen. Train management, City Council composition, and economic conditions can change. Any of these would affect the dynamic and what is agreed upon now might be challenged somewhere down the line despite any agreements made today. It is in the interest of both Mendocino Railway and particularly the City, to make sure this is done right.

For instance, on the maps provided and in the railroad's presentation, there was to be an expansion of the railroad's downtown station footprint, including the building of a new station and a track loop. I believe it was stated that everything inside the loop will be considered under federal railroad jurisdiction. That's quite an increase of area from their current operation. Personally, that design concept seems to be a reasonable move and good for both railroad and City, but is the Railroad arbitrarily doing that expansion or can it only be done with the City's approval? If it's at their discretion only, what's to prevent them from exercising that same discretion anywhere else? If it's allowed to happen once, it sets a precedent for further expansions, again at their discretion, without the City's approval. That's what so many people are worried about. The question is, absent a definitive judgement in the lawsuit, will there be an ironclad legally binding

contract signed to prevent the railroad from changing their mind about compliance with any agreement that's reached? A simple memorandum of understanding is not enough. In addition, penalties for any breach should be included that are harsh enough to deter the temptation to step over the line.

Is it even possible to construct such a contract? I don't know, I'll admit to being pretty ignorant about the law. But I know that both parties want to settle this somehow and stop spending money on the legal process. However, there is obviously a reason that the railroad has spent so much time and money on the question of whether they are a public railway. This could have been settled long ago, but I'm sure there's something in their long term plans that will require they remain a public railway. You all know that, too, or you wouldn't have pursued the lawsuit for so long. I admire your foresight and persistence so far and hope that diligence continues.

But we seem to be on the verge of changing direction. Personally, I believe that the continued pursuit and successful conclusion of the lawsuit process in the City's favor would ensure that cooperation is mandatory, or be a strong point in any future litigation. At the very least, though, if everyone insists on dropping the lawsuit, I would suggest, if possible, that it would be requested to be dismissed without prejudice so that a case could start again at its current place in the court progression if legal action winds up being needed in the future. The City has leverage now, don't throw it away for the sake of expediency.

I know that what I'm saying here isn't anything you haven't already considered, but the prize is so very tantalizing and close that it can distract from the dangers that might lie ahead. While trusting the City's current representation, I still recommend that an outside second opinion about any agreement be sought.

As was mentioned a number of times during the presentation, the development on the millsite will be a very long term process. Many of you, probably all of you, will no longer be in your positions further on down the road. The decisions you make now will be your legacy and have huge implications for the future of Fort Bragg. I hope you will tread wisely and carefully.

Mark Taylor
Fort Bragg