



CITY NOTES

January 1, 2015

THE FUTURE OF THE GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL SITE

A dozen years have passed since Georgia-Pacific (GP) permanently shuttered the Fort Bragg mill. The following is an update on the status of the former mill site- the approximately 400-acre oceanfront property that comprises one-third of the land area within Fort Bragg's city limits.

REMEDIATION>> Since the mill closed, GP has been investigating and cleaning up contaminated soils and groundwater on the mill site property. The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is overseeing the environmental remediation process. The City Council, acting in its capacity as the Fort Bragg Redevelopment Successor Agency, also provides oversight to make sure that the mill site is cleaned up to make it safe for potential future land uses. In 2009, GP completed the clean up of the coastal area (known as Operable Unit A) prior to the City's acquisition of 85 acres for a coastal park. GP has also performed a number of "interim remedial actions" to clean up soils and groundwater elsewhere on the property. Roughly 85% of the former mill site is now cleaned up. DTSC will conduct the community participation process for the Operable Units C & D Remedial Action Plan in early 2015 so that GP can complete remediation in those areas later in the year. The most complicated area of the site to clean up is Operable Unit E (OU-E) which includes the low-lying areas in the center of the mill site where the former mill and powerhouse were located and a number of ponds on the site that were used for processing industrial wastewater. GP has prepared a Baseline Environmental and Human Health Risk Assessment (BEHHRA) for OU-E and it is being reviewed by DTSC. Once the BEHHRA is approved, then a Feasibility Study and Remedial Action Plan will be prepared for OU-E. That process is likely to extend into 2016. While GP has taken a long time to complete the remediation, the good news is that the process is wrapping up just as the economy is recovering, thereby improving GP's prospects for marketing the mill site for redevelopment.

COASTAL TRAIL>> In 2004, the City of Fort Bragg conducted a "visioning" process to plan for redevelopment of the mill site. The top community priority identified in that process was for public access to the 3.5 miles of coastline that, for more than a century, had been behind the gates of the mill. The City worked hard to convince GP to sell the coastline to allow for development of a coastal park and trail as an initial public amenity on the former mill site. In 2010, the City acquired 85 acres along the coast with a \$4.25 million grant from the State Coastal Conservancy and a generous donation of property from GP. Another \$5 million in grant funds was secured for construction of a coastal trail and restoration of the site. After years of planning, design and permitting, construction of the Fort Bragg Coastal Restoration & Trail Project began in 2014. The trail and park improvements on the northern half of the mill site are nearly complete. Next spring, the southern half of the coastal trail will be constructed. The new Noyo Headlands Park will open to the public in 2015. Initially, the park will have two separate areas: the north park will extend from Glass Beach to Otsuchi Point on the north side of Soldier Bay, and the south park will extend from Noyo Point Road to the City's wastewater treatment plant on the south side of Soldier Bay. GP also has made an irrevocable offer to dedicate additional parkland to the City in the central portion of the site. Once the remediation

process is completed in OU-E, the City will accept title to the remainder of the parkland and the north and south coastal trail segments will be connected. The environmental review and permitting currently are underway for that project, known as Phase 2 of the Coastal Trail.

NOYO CENTER FOR MARINE SCIENCE>> Along with the coastal trail, the early visioning process for reuse of the mill site identified a strong community interest in a marine science center. A number of studies were undertaken to determine the feasibility and appropriate focus and scale of such a project and the Noyo Center for Marine Science was born. One of the final actions of the Fort Bragg Redevelopment Agency prior to its dissolution in 2011 was to purchase an 11-acre property for the Noyo Center for Marine Science. It is located adjacent to the City's parkland on the south side of the mill site. Conceptual design plans have been prepared for a field station on the site that will include research labs, a Discovery Center museum, and exhibit space for the 75-foot Blue Whale skeleton that has been entrusted to the City. Currently, the Noyo Center office is located on Laurel Street adjacent to City Hall. Over the past year, the Noyo Center's focus has been on preserving the blue whale skeleton, providing marine science educational programs for local students, launching a website (noyocenter.org), establishing the Noyo Center non-profit organization, developing research partnerships, and gearing up for a major fundraising campaign.

MILL SITE SPECIFIC PLAN>> The Fort Bragg City Council has the legislative authority to establish zoning for all properties within the City limits. Zoning for properties within the coastal zone, including the mill site, requires concurrence by the California Coastal Commission. Right now, the mill site is zoned for timber-related industrial uses. The City, GP and the community spent several years preparing a "specific plan" to rezone the mill site for a variety of future uses and to plan for the extension of infrastructure and services. As the property owner, GP funded the specific plan process until 2012 when the City was dragged into GP's cost-recovery lawsuit for the mill site remediation. At that time, work on the specific plan was suspended. Now that the litigation is over, the City Council and GP will need to decide how to proceed with completion of the specific plan.

BREWERY PROJECT>> By this time, most folks are aware of the North Coast Brewing Company's (NCBC) interest in expanding its production facilities in Fort Bragg. NCBC is a very successful local business that produces excellent craft beer for customers throughout the country. As demand for its product has grown, NCBC has maxed out production capacity at its current facility. NCBC would like to build a new state-of-the-art "destination" brewery with a beer garden/restaurant on the mill site property. This project, combined with the Coastal Trail and the Noyo Center, could help jump-start market interest in other development opportunities on the mill site. It's an exciting prospect for NCBC, GP and our community.

City Notes is published on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the column, feel free to contact City Manager Linda Ruffing at (707) 961-2823, ext. 118 or L.Ruffing@fortbragg.com.