

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL SITE;  
OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION  
AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

By

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific mill-site in Fort Bragg California, a case involving a long-term planning process with multiple layers that encompasses a host of complex and intricate issues. The three central issues addressed in this work are; 1) an analysis of a community-based approach that the author recommends should guide the planning process and identify appropriate policies and projects for the mill site redevelopment, and; 2) a description of the various methods that can be used to enhance public participation to create a community-generated vision that can provide goals for the redevelopment planning process, and; 3) the description of a collaborative planning process that could potentially be used in this case. This thesis then concludes with the recommendation of a mediated multi-party planning process, or stakeholder collaborative, to help facilitate cooperation between stakeholders on the creation of a Specific Plan required for the mill-site's redevelopment.

In that this thesis was initiated during the scoping and pre-planning phase of the site's redevelopment, this work is forward looking. It analyses this case in its infancy and attempts to advise the community and key decision-makers on matters of policy direction and public participation methods that can be employed as the process proceeds.

The field research methods for this work included (approximately) twenty semi-structured key informant interviews used to sample the personal perspectives of involved citizens, planning professionals, and elected officials within the community of Fort Bragg between February of 2003 and September of 2003. These interviews were used to inform

the researcher's understanding of an 'insider's' view of the context as a whole, detail involving municipal government, and the hopes and fears of local citizens for their community's future. Each interview contained a general range of questions that was compiled prior to commencing the interview phase.

This thesis also includes a significant experiential component derived from participant observation of events between May 2003 and February 2004, as well as direct presentations by the author to both the community and the Fort Bragg City Council.

The researcher compiled observation research as a participant in public forums and private group meetings hosted both by a local citizen group, North Coast Action (NCA) and by the Fort Bragg City Council. Participation in events sponsored by NCA included; discussion of a "community-based" approach to redevelopment, explanation of various participatory mechanisms, recommendation of collaborative planning processes, political analysis, grass-roots strategy dialog, and assistance in facilitating a community visioning forum. This experiential process culminated in four presentations before the community describing a community-based approach to the redevelopment and the concluding recommendations of the thesis. Two presentations were held at community forums hosted by North Coast Action, see Appendix E and F, and the third took place at the invitation of Mayor Jere Mello before the Fort Bragg City Council at a regularly scheduled Council meeting, see Appendix C, and the final presentation took place before the Fort Bragg City Council at the request of North Coast Action, see Appendix G.

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I would like to acknowledge everyone in the City of Fort Bragg who has, in some way or another, aided or been involved in the creation of this thesis. Specifically, I would like to thank the members of North Coast Action for allowing me a space as an observer and participant in so many of their group meetings and public forums. I have been grateful for a seat at the table. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to members of the Fort Bragg City Council for participating in my research interviews and providing feedback as this thesis progressed. I appreciate Mayor Jere Melo inviting me to give a presentation before the Council on my thesis conclusion and recommendations. That was a wonderful opportunity for me to translate theory into a 'real world' context for practical application and to refine my public presentation skills while doing so. I also thank various City staff members and Community Development Director Linda Ruffing

in particular for answering questions and providing insight that helped clarify various municipal policies.

Thank you also to the community of Fort Bragg itself as well. I have come to love that little town with a big future. Good intentions, hard work, unity, and faith in a vision will further the whole.

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## FOREWORD

With the closure of the Georgia-Pacific mill Fort Bragg's life as a timber mill town now recedes into history. Although this is an ending, it is at the same time a new beginning toward further horizons beyond which little may be seen. While some measure of uncertainty still exists, we can acknowledge that the future is bright with possibility. Though the community may not know exactly what will come to unfold, hope exists where a vision can be seen. And who now can see around the bend, beyond the many twists and turns, short cuts or delays that lie ahead? Not I. Nor, could the people of this charming little town, whether they are the average citizen or entrusted official, see with total comprehension the full measure and complexity of the task before them. Yet, this is the uncertainty of new beginnings that must be met head-on and embraced wholeheartedly, if possibilities are to be realized. And this is where we now stand, though we know not which direction the path may lead.

This thesis is dedicated to posterity, that one day we may look back and see what has become.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

I came across the closure and inevitable redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific mill-site in Fort Bragg while on a research trip held by Professor Michael Smith, in his Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation class, Rural Community Planning. Through my own regional awareness and through our concentrated studies on rural community planning, I understood many of the complex issues facing communities like Fort Bragg. It was on this visit that I learned Georgia-Pacific had just announced that they were indeed closing the mill permanently. Standing there in the middle of the deserted mill with our class, a G-P representative, and a staff member of the Fort Bragg Community Development Department was a moment I will never forget, as an apprehensive fear of an unknown future was mixed with all the promise and hope of many possibilities for the community in the future.

It was apparent to all that the property would likely be cleaned up and redeveloped for other uses in the future. The real question seemed to be how the redevelopment was going to be handled in terms of the various policies and processes that would govern the outcome of the redevelopment. Specifically, I was engaged with two main concerns: what would be the municipal policy-level approach that would set the direction for future decisions, and what would be the methods of public participation that would be used to involve the community in the planning and decision making processes? After ruminating on these questions for some time and evaluating the nuances of this

particular situation in relation to the other cases I had studied, a thesis began to form. I became inspired by the potential of the City adopting a community-based approach to the redevelopment and the prospect of strong civic engagement in the planning process. My research began to uncover a host of innovative community development projects that could be possible if they were articulated as municipal policy goals for the redevelopment process. My research, training, and experience showed that there were a variety of participatory mechanisms which could be used to provide the community with substantive avenues for constructive public participation in planning for the town's future. Thereafter, I decided to switch my thesis topic to focus on the Redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific Mill Site Fort Bragg, CA.; Options and Alternatives for Public Participation in the Planning Process.

### Overview

The goal of this literature review was to gain a general understanding of the foundational issues in the community development field as it relates to this case with a specific focus on the following areas of study:

- I.) Innovative methods used in the revitalization of both rural and urban communities.
- II.) Participatory mechanisms used to enhance public participation (a.k.a. civic engagement).
- III.) The application of multi-party planning processes such as a stakeholder collaborative.

This phase commenced by reviewing all material obtained through the course work offered by Humboldt State's Environment and Community Master's program. The resources gained through three courses, "Community and Place", "Public Policy & Community Participation" and "Rural Community Planning" were particularly beneficial. Resources found in Humboldt State University's library were useful in order to gain an understanding of the theoretical evolution and professional progress within these areas of study over the last several decades. An internet based search was employed specifically to explore the latest developments emerging in the study of brown-field reclamation and urban revitalization efforts, as well as current trends with regards to public participation. These topics were found to be very well covered through the professional discourse taking place online.

This literature review was also greatly aided by resources supplied by members of my thesis committee, each respected experts in their fields. My professional training in conflict resolution with the Institute for Study of Alternative Dispute Resolution, specifically the information gathered from Susan Carpenter's course, Handling Complex Public Disputes was particularly valuable in strengthening my knowledge of the techniques used to establish a proactive, collaborative approach to public policy issues,.

Through out this period, useful articles were also gleaned from local, regional, and national newspapers. These sources provided up-to-date information on projects taking place nationally in contexts similar to Fort Bragg. These cases could serve as examples of projects that are representative of a community-based approach to development for local leaders. Local newspaper sources were also appreciated in that

they strengthened my general understanding of the workings of local government in particular and the nuances of municipal financing for community development projects in Fort Bragg.

The three main premises upon which this thesis focuses are detailed in the following sections to shed light on each giving potential examples of their application, concluding with the thesis recommendation of a specific multi-party planning process that could be used to ensure this outcome.

It should be noted here that the discussion in the following literature review is meant to be framed in the context of large-scale, multi-faceted community development and/or redevelopment projects similar to that of the G-P Mill Site Redevelopment case in Fort Bragg. In such cases, "the project" is often an extensive addition to or revision of the community that require extensive studies covering a wide range of issues from toxicology to historic preservation in order to produce a draft Master Plan or Specific Plan with associated environmental documents for a formal public review and official approval process. While the author is speaking to theories, concepts, examples and strategies that are applicable across urban and rural socio-economic boundaries, the discussion here should be interpreted to apply specifically to the unique blend of dynamics found in cases like Fort Bragg's, whether urban or rural.

### Thesis Summary

The Georgia-Pacific mill-site in Fort Bragg California is a property imbued with deep historic, cultural, social, economic, and political significance. The property's

redevelopment will inevitably have immense impacts on a wide variety of quality of life issues for present and future local citizens and regional residents. Thus, as the property's redevelopment will irrevocably change the community in many ways, the outcome of the redevelopment process is a paramount concern for the community as a whole. This concern with unknown possible future outcomes of the redevelopment draws attention to the guiding processes that will set a direction and focus for the unfolding of any potential outcomes. This reasoning establishes a preeminent public interest in the pre-planning, policy-level decisions that will serve as guiding principles for the overarching redevelopment process that will take place. This public interest necessitates a high level of public participation in order to ensure that the policy approach and subsequent processes of the redevelopment program align with community generated goals and objectives. With a heightened emphasis on the nature and method of public participation in the planning process, I assert that this critical aspect of the planning process, civic engagement, can be facilitated by using various participatory mechanisms, which can be used to enhance constructive public participation in a long-term planning process. By employing these methods in appropriate venues at key points in the planning process, a coherent community-based vision can emerge to help guide and shape the outcome of the redevelopment process according to the values, goals, and objectives established by the community. This perspective is established as a community-based approach to the mill-site's redevelopment.

With this community-based approach established as the foundation of this thesis, the question asked is, given the social cleavages in the community, the complexity of the

issues involved in the mill site redevelopment, the various interests each party has in the outcome of the process, this thesis attempts to explain how a diverse party of stakeholders (community members, land owners, developers, municipality, government agencies, nonprofit organizations) can work together to achieve an outcome that reflect the desires of the whole community and meets each parties needs.

Furthermore, as uncovered by my research, due to the extreme complexity of this situation, the multiplicity of interests involved, and a wide spread concern over the possibility of division within the community or conflict with Georgia-Pacific or an unknown developer in the future, this thesis asserts that the City Council should help establish a cooperative working environment between stakeholders, thereby tapping into the collaborative potential that could exist if such a process could be successfully sponsored. This thesis concludes with a recommendation that focuses on the establishment of a collaborative Charter which, could be used to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders on the creation of a Specific Plan, a planning document that serves as a comprehensive blue print for the redevelopment.

The Charter is an organizational method used to constitute an official facilitated partnership agreement amongst a diverse group of interdependent stakeholders with the purpose of mediating collaboration and cooperative problem solving according to a consensus-based decision making process. Essentially, the Charter is a formal agreement between parties to work together cooperatively toward a common goal, to mediate potential disagreements along the way, and to ultimately reach decisions according to consensus. The overriding purpose of a Charter is the creation of a lasting, viable process

or proposal that is acceptable to all parties and can be effectively implemented through rigorous legal and public review. In my assessment, it would be the perfect compliment for a long-term planning process involving multiple public policy issues, such as the mill-site redevelopment. It is best suited for complex, multi-party situations, wherein a multitude of delicate issues and involved interests will need to be fairly balanced for a successful outcome.

Essentially, the analysis for this recommendation is that it is in the best interest of the City, the citizens, G-P, and any potential developer or relevant stakeholder involved in the mill-site's redevelopment to work together in an officially recognized, concerted and consistent maner and a Charter offers the means to do so. Establishing a Charter would represent a proactive approach toward building the relationships necessary to achieve a delicate balance for the creation of a Specific Plan that every one can be proud of. It is my assessment that a collaborative Charter would be a perfect compliment for this extremely intricate situation and the delicate times to come.

### A Community-Based Approach

Many authors working in the field of community development have discussed the need to establish a preferred public policy approach that frames the context within which development and/or redevelopment projects occur (Cherry, 1970, Flora, 1992, Caves, 1992, Arendt, 1994, Daniels 1999, Richardson, 2000). This thesis outlines the discussions held in previous works that elaborate on what is described as a community-based approach to development (Clawson and Dysart, 1988, Landry, 2000, Richardson,

2000, Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000). This community-based approach to development is founded on three central theoretical themes that will be discussed in the following literature review: 1) Preeminent Public Interest, 2) Civic Engagement, and 3) Collaborative Potential.

### Preeminent Public Interest

In their early works of the subject of community development, authors Cherry, Relph, and Fagence each touched on the central importance of the impacts development projects have on the daily lives of community residents (Cherry, 1970; Fagence, 1977; Relph, 1976, Krannich; 1992). These and other authors have clearly showed how development trends shape community culture and determine the level of vitality and sustainability or dependency and volatility experienced by any given place. For example, both Hall and Gunn described communities wherein the volatile effects of a single-resource economy such as the coal mining region of Appalachia or the timber towns of the Pacific Northwest lead to boom and bust cycles, leaving local residents facing high unemployment and low moral (Hall, 1986; Gunn and Gunn, 1991). Touching on his theory of placelessness, Relph clearly showed the result of poorly conceived development projects that fracture a community's sense of place by destroying iconic locations and architecture (Relph, 1976). Relph shows us that such examples are found in urban, suburban and rural places throughout the country as classic burger stands are torn down to build the latest Starbucks, more strip malls are built over ever-dwindling open space, while historic buildings are razed to erect skyline-dominating office towers. Speaking on

the same subject, author Randall Arendt focuses on the rural context in particular by describing the importance of very rich and detailed community cultures that are organically crafted through the depths of the historic evolution of those locales (Arendt; 1994). He states that, "the value of these various community cultures that make up the diverse weave of America's social fabric is nothing less than the foundation this country's cultural heritage" (p.24).

In their seminal work on the New Urbanism movement "Community by Design", Kenneth Hall and Gerald Porterfield take turns focusing on several specific key impacts any given development project will have on a community (Hall and Porterfield; 2001). These impacts include; employment opportunity, housing affordability, public services, local revenue base, civic cultural assets, and environmental amenities such as open space and coastal access. The main point Hall and Porterfield make here is that development projects impacting communities should be carefully planned with the community itself being the most important factor to be considered.

As a result of these revelations, leading experts have begun to comment on the need to craft a preferred public policy approach to development in order for the outcome of development projects to be appropriate to a community's needs, desires, and culture. (Engwicht, 1993; (Duncan, Nelson; 1995; Satterthwaite, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2000; Richardson; 2000). For the purpose of this thesis, the preferred public policy approach described by these previous commentators is here referred to as the Preeminent Public Interest. Simply stated, development projects have such immense impacts on a variety of quality of life issues for a community that the public's interests should be considered of

preeminent importance in planning, designing, evaluating or implementing any given community development or redevelopment project. Satterthwaite (1999) and Richardson (2000) in particular urge that the preeminent interests of the public should be used to establish a strong and proactive stance in promoting development projects that are not only reflective of but that strengthen the existing socio-economic foundations of a place. The theory of Preeminent Public Interest plainly establishes the collective well-being and unique cultural makeup of a specific community as primary values that should guide any public planning process.

Using this focus as the preferred public policy approach to community development planning processes, other authors have provided examples of specific projects that have both succeeded and failed to live up to this goal of putting the community first. In "The Ahwahnee Principles for Smart Economic Development: An Implementation Guidebook", authors Davis, Norton, and Zykofsly (1998) give several case studies that show community-appropriate projects generally have the following traits: 1) They try to widely distribute the benefits of the proposed projects by helping to diversify the economic base thereby widening the employment opportunity structure of the community; 2) They create or strengthen existing civic assets such as cultural amenities and environmental qualities that improve a place's quality of life experience; 3) They enhance participatory democracy by engaging local citizens in the planning and development of project proposals that would be implemented in their own communities (Davis, Norton, and Zykofsly; 1998). These three points deserve to be briefly demonstrated in more detail for the purposes of proceeding

In further analysis on the first point, authors Swann and Power both assert that a community-based approach must "create distributive benefits", that is, projects must benefit diverse segments of the population rather than a small group of investor and project proponents (Swann, 1989; Power, 1996). In each of their works on the professional practice of community development, several cited authors also provide the following examples of specific projects that are representative of this approach that attempts to serve multiple segments of the community; a small business complex, an entrepreneurial incubator, arts and skills-based cooperatives, training and skills development centers, as well as public, high-tech, and industrial infrastructure (Abbett, Witherspoon, Gladstone, 1976; and Daniels, 1999). In particular, *The Small Town Planning Handbook* provides cases of dos and don'ts if the goal of a planning process is to benefit a whole community (Daniels, Keller, and Lapping; 1990). For example, in order to create distributive benefits by implementing a particular project, do ensure multiple project components are economically enhancing and well suited to the various strengths and opportunities that have been identified. In order to avoid creating a special benefit for a small sector of industries, property owners, or capital investors, don't provide preferential or privileged terms for any party.

The second point made here on the importance of creating civic assets as a part of development proposals is that the preeminent public interest should be served by promoting and providing cultural and environmental amenities that enhance the community's character. Examples given by various authors such as coastal access, recreational trail systems, art centers, extended educational facilities, community farms,

and affordable housing arrangements show the important contribution they make to the richness of civic life (Zdenek, 1987; Hasselstrom, 1992; Pruetz, 1993;). In *Community Development Corporations* Robert Zdenek discusses how these types of community-serving project components are often developed, operated, and maintained by locally based non-profit groups (Zdenek; 1987). Furthermore, as discussed in *Community Land Trusts* by Matthie and White, in order to acquire and/or preserve public open space and recreational access the participation of community trusts are often promoted as vital project partners (Matthie and White; 1987). As all of these writers have invariably commented, important community assets such as these are vital components of a community's quality of living and culture and their inclusion in any major community development project should be considered a preeminent part of public's interest.

The last point made here under the theory of the preeminent public interest is that development projects should enhance participatory democracy by engaging local citizens in the planning and development of the project proposals that would be implemented in their own communities (Davis, Norton and Zykofsly; 1998). As this point also forms the basis of the second theoretical theme central to the literature review of this thesis, only a brief discussion is needed to introduce the theory described here as "civic engagement". As Coppock and Sewell describe in their early book on the matter, *Public Participation in Planning* civic engagement (the processes by which community members become personally involved in some aspect of a public planning process that will affect their own lives and the nature of their community), is essential to achieving a community-based

approach (Coppock and Sewell; 1977). Civic engagement has been described as the moment citizens turn from passive observers of inevitable and uncontrollable changes in their communities to active participants in the design and construction of their physical surroundings and their civic experience (Fagence; 1977). Both Caves and Putnam remark on the surprising power communities have when the creative potential of the public is unleashed (Caves, 1992; Putnam, 2000). As they conclude in their works, it is essential that the direct involvement of members of a community in the decision making processes should be promoted and that established community-generated goals and objectives should guide the development of any important community development project that will fundamentally affect their lives. The next section of this literature review focuses on the second theoretical theme central to this thesis by detailing the various options and alternatives that might be used to enhance public participation in complex, multi-party planning processes such as the case with the mill site redevelopment in Fort Bragg.

### Civic Engagement

Given the community-based focus this thesis assumes as the preferred public policy approach, a significant spotlight needs to be placed on the theoretical concepts comprising this notion of civic engagement as well as the practical application of methods that can be used to enhance the public's participation in community development planning processes.

Beyond those mentioned in the brief discussion above, several other authors have also put extensive work into the dialogue on the need for increased public participation in planning processes (Mayer, 1984; Krause, 1998; Innes and Booher, 2000). In particular, *Public Participation in Planning: New Strategies for the 21st Century* by Innes and Booher provides a rather scathing analysis of the isolated "technocratic bureaucracy" that professional planners and consultants typically operate within while undertaking the design of community development projects (Innes and Booher, 2000). The picture they clearly paint is one of a well rehearsed routine wherein professional planners from outside a community descend upon the citizenry with an array of scripted survey questions and tightly controlled public meetings to perform a brief and limited outreach campaign in order to meet the legal minimum standard for public participation.

This style of public meeting is more often than not oriented around presenting information based on a project proponent's preferred project alternative using technical studies funded by the proponent that shows how great the proposal would be for the community. In essence, this style of engagement is a public relations show meant to sell the project to a community after it has already been developed rather than involving the community in scoping, developing, and refining a project proposal in a proactive manner up front.

The point made by these authors is that given the premise of the preeminent public interest in a community's development, the importance of civic engagement is one of the most important aspect of any planning process and it must be actively promoted as being of equal if not greater importance than technical reports on waste water capacity or

market opportunities. As James Segedy points out in *Community-Based Workshops: Building Partnerships for Community Vitality* the public's vital interest in its own development requires proactive and sustained public participation throughout the planning process and in order to ensure this happens, those amongst the local leadership and planning professionals, as well as project proponents themselves need to view the community members as valuable partners and contributors to an inclusive process (Segedy; 1997).

With the goal of advancing the agenda of civic engagement, Charles Landry's work offers a "Tool Kit for Urban Innovators" that contains a helpful list of various "participatory mechanisms" which could be used to enhance genuine and active public participation in order to assist with establishing community-based goals to guide the creation of specific development proposals (Landry, 00). Landry discusses traditional outreach tools such as public forums and community surveys, but he also recommends other interesting methods such as idea competitions, citizen advisory groups, and a particular kind of participatory workshop called the planning "charrett".

The planning charrett is described as the "hands on" planning method, an interactive workshop environment that involves average citizens, stakeholders representatives, and technical experts as coequal participants in an active and focused workshop environment. The purpose of a charrett is to establish goals and define objectives, to generate ideas and explore options, as well as generating feedback on specific community issues or project components previously developed by the group.

In Visioning Moore, Longo, and Palmer take pains to outline another valuable participatory mechanism used to enhance public participation in planning processes (Moore, Longo, and Palmer; 2000). These writers describe the “Visioning” process much as it sounds, a way by which a community can envision a preferred and detailed picture of its future then work backwards by looking at what would be required to manifest that ideal scenario. They lay out the following set of steps required to undertake a successful visioning process: 1) Initiate broad-based community outreach; 2) Establish inclusive dialogue to help build consensus on common quality of life values and the unique identity of the particular place; 3) Identify the community’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; 4) Create an inventory of local resources; 5) Build on local assets; 6) Highly publicize the visioning process; 7) Provide a long range focus for the community such as a 20, 50, or 100 year outlook. In their valuable contribution to the topic, the authors emphasize that a visioning exercise should be goal oriented in order to produce a tangible outcome that can be published so the results of the visioning can be widely distributed.

Under the topic of civic engagement, the last participatory mechanism briefly discussed here is that of the ‘community action plan’ (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000). The intent of a community action plan is essentially to build on the contributions of prior public participation gained through the initial community outreach phase of a planning process. The goal here is to seek ways to design, engineer, and ultimately implement the community's wishes with the Specific or Master Plans that will be permitted and built out. As they explain, a community action plan is a strategic planning process that utilizes

all the project-specific research, technical analyses, typical studies, and detailed reports provided by each stakeholder that would be used to evaluate and prioritize the steps needed to bring a community's vision to life.

### Collaborative Potential

Building on the two theoretical premises previously discussed, those of the preeminent public interest and civic engagement, the third premise of this thesis is based on the theory of what is termed here the Collaborative Potential. Building on recent work in the field of dispute resolution and stakeholder collaboration, the theory of the collaborative potential is illustrated by such well noted scholars as Innes and Booher and especially well by, Lawrence Susskind in his work, *A Consensus Building Handbook* (Innes and Booher, 2000; Susskind, 1999). These authors recommend that a multi-party planning process, or stakeholder collaborative, that is mediated by a neutral third party be established to help facilitate cooperation between stakeholders on the creation of the specific planning documents that would be submitted for formal review and approval. Simply put, the collaborative potential is unleashed when parties start working together in a collective process in order to help create mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders involved (McKinney, 1998). Specifically, collaboration refers to a process whereby a unified group of diverse stakeholders agree to work together to achieve a common purpose and they share resources needed to plan and then implement a collective vision (Arthur, Carlson, and Moore; 1999).

The contributors to *Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future: Putting Principles into Practice* point out several of the following salient features of a collaborative planning process: 1) They build productive working relationships between the various stakeholders; 2) They often lead to innovative partnerships that are able to leverage scarce resources; 3) They frequently use inventive thinking and multiple approaches to build on components of the community vision; 4) They formalize a structure for a collaborative decision making processes that involves each stakeholder by which a final plan or proposed project will be crafted, evaluated and eventually adopted (Cormick, Dale, Edmond, Sigurdson and Stuart; 1996). As noted in the collection of works cited here, there are several cases where a collaborative planning process is most often applied; in situations where multiple parties are interdependent for a project or a plan's success; where over-lapping jurisdictional authority or responsibility exists; where parties have mutual interests and/or concerns that may not be sufficiently addressed by a traditional planning process, and/or cases where entrenched conflict has prevented any progress.

For these reasons, a collaborative approach is recommended in situations like this to build relationships between stakeholders to mitigate the potential for conflict and to mediate consensus amongst diverse parties. A stakeholders collaborative can also provide increased transparency for the decision making process in cases where the perceptions or precedents have lead to concerns over any particular party having a privileged position in the process (Arthur, Carlson, and Moore; 1999). A collaborative approach is also used to facilitate formal partnership agreement between stake-holders

groups, to provide the means for genuine, long-term public participation, and to maintain continuity in the planning process to ensure positive outcome (McKinney, 1998).

### The Collaborative Charter

With the previous discussion providing a basis for the third and last theoretical premise of this thesis (the Collaborative Potential), we will conclude here with the recommendation of a specific type of a formal collaborative planning process that could be practically applied in the case of the redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific mill site in Fort Bragg in order to achieve the important goals previously discussed. In order to ensure that the public's preeminent interests are respected and represented, in order to advance civic engagement in the community where this immense project will be undertaken, and in order to utilize the collaborative potential of all parties involved in one planning process, this thesis concludes with the recommendation that the stakeholder representatives involved with this case form a collaborative Charter.

The Charter is an organizational method used to constitute an official and facilitated partnership agreement amongst a diverse group of interdependent stakeholders with the purpose of mediating collaboration and cooperative problem solving according to a consensus-based decision making process. This is a formal agreement between parties to work together toward a common goal, to share resources when possible, and to mediate potential disagreement in a way that respects each party's basic interests (Cormick, Dale, Edmond, Sigurdson and Stuart; 1996).

The intention set by forming a collaborative Charter in the case of Fort Bragg's mill-site redevelopment is to structure a stable and equitable public process to operate in conjunction and coordination with long-term municipal and private planning activities taking place in regards to the mill-site's redevelopment. It would be the goal of a collaborative process to ensure that all stakeholder interests would be fairly represented and considered in the creation of a Specific Plan that would actually be used to implement the planned redevelopment. The main purpose of a Charter is to create a stable process and constructive partnerships with which to develop a viable plan for this site that is acceptable to all parties and can be successfully implemented through multiple legally mandated public and regulatory reviews (Moore, Longo, and Palmer; 2000). A group guided by a collaborative Charter would in no way attempt to usurp the autonomy or authority of any stakeholder, whether they represent a property owner, elected body, citizen group, or state agency. Indeed, this type of public planning process is a voluntary association of a wide array of diverse groups that often operate in a non-binding, advisory capacity to either assist in or directly develop specific projects, planning documents, or even regulatory legislation that is subject to review and approval to all applicable law.

According to Susan Carpenter's *Handling Complex Public Disputes*, a Charter operates according to the mission, principles, agenda, and time-line set by its participants as applicable to the particular situation and utilizing a neutral third party to facilitate a series of focused planning sessions. The Charter process establishes an operating group to facilitate communication, educational outreach, and partnership building to follow through with implementation of the community's development vision. The proposed

collaborative would seek to coordinate and integrate existing information and independent studies supplied by the stakeholder groups. Specific projects or proposals that require supplementary expertise, additional analysis, or further feasibility study would be identified. Potential projects, proposals, and redevelopment uses would be categorized, prioritized, and assessed according to existing frameworks of evaluation in relation to community generated goals and the collaborative would work to integrate appropriate uses with the Specific Plan.

As opposed to a traditional approach of principle party negotiation, I assert that a formal collaborative Charter could present many of the following advantages. It would provide a greater degree of control and predictability of outcome for all stakeholders by establishing and preserving healthy, long-term working relationships. A “front end” investment in long-term planning processes can ultimately save time and money by establishing cooperative dispute resolution methods, thereby avoiding conflicts and protracted litigation in the future. Consensus can translate into concrete actions that can be implemented through partnership arraignments that can provide research, development, implementation, and maintenance resources for a variety of individual projects. It could be used to help create proposals that are feasible from both economic and community perspectives, as “ownership” of a viable solution by several stakeholders is often necessary for successful implementation of joint venture, public/private, and public benefit projects. A formal collaborative could enhance social and political capital among participants and within the community as a whole by addressing and reducing polarization through encouraging cooperation, creativity, and innovation. The process

would give elected officials and private development interests an opportunity to demonstrate cooperative intention and good faith by involving other stakeholders who are affected by the outcome of planning and decision making processes but who have historically not been central participants.

Furthermore, some likely benefits of a collaborative Charter in this situation would be that the current and future City Councils would receive a carefully mediated process that could mitigate citizen concerns and implement a viable strategic vision. Both G-P and any potential developer would benefit from a front-end process that ensures a healthy working relationship with the City and other stakeholders, thereby reducing the exposure of their investment to the risks and costs involved in complex situation such as this. The citizens would have visible and tangible access to a planning process that could ensure constructive participation. State agencies and other relevant entities would appreciate an approachable framework of cooperation for their potential involvement.

In conclusion, the redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific mill-site, while providing many exciting possibilities for the future, also involves a variety of complex public policy, private development, and community interest issues. This situation also presents a significant challenge to community leaders in terms of both crafting a community-wide consensus on the development policies that will guide the redevelopment, as well as a host of specific details concerning a Specific Plan that is required to amend the general plan and rezone the property for redevelopment. It is primarily due to this anticipated difficulty, the over all complexity of the situation, and the need to form lasting

partnership arraignments that a proactive, a collaborative process is recommended by this thesis.

The experiential component of this thesis was comprised in part by the development and presentation of this model of collaboration to the elected leadership of the City of Fort Bragg at the request of the citizen group North Coast Action. Further elaboration on the application of a Charter process to the Fort Bragg case is provided in the extensive proposal provided in Appendix H.

## KEY INFORMANT, FOCUS GROUP, AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Upon entering the field research phase of this thesis, three basic premises had been articulated into a specific theoretical framework within which this thesis would be written. This theoretical framework, as outlined in the literature review, is described as a community-based perspective on the mill-site's redevelopment. The three premises that form this thesis as described in the previous review of the literature on the subject are the following;

Premise #1: Pre-eminent Public Interest

Premise #2: Civic Engagement

Premise #3: Collaborative Potential

It was decided that field data collection was necessary in order to form a proper evaluation as to the applicability of these three premises to the case in question. To test the applicability of these premises it became apparent that there were several styles of research methods that could be employed to achieve the goals of this phase. The primary goal established in selecting my research methods was to closely observe the means and methods of public participation taking place in the planning process and to assemble a sample set that I could consider representative of a community-based perspective on the mill-site's redevelopment. A secondary goal that I set in selecting my field research methods was to acquire a deeper understanding of the local context and the intricate nuances of the situation as applicable to the public's participation in the redevelopment planning process. At issue here was my understanding of the relevant background

information and the community history involving Fort Bragg. This information set was required in properly analyzing the situation and in determining the potential applicability of a community-based approach to the mill-site redevelopment given the nature of the community dynamics and to recommend the best planning process to ensure that outcome.

The initial research method used for this work included approximately twenty open-ended, semi-structured key informant and stakeholder interviews. These interviews were used to sample the personal perspectives of involved citizens, planning professionals, and elected officials within the community of Fort Bragg. I submitted an interview proposal for review in order to obtain human subjects approval to perform this series of interviews, see Appendix A. I created a “release of confidentiality” form for each participant to fill out as a part of these interviews in case I decided that any comments were useful to the thesis and might be printed as a direct quotation, see Appendix B. These interviews, however, were not used as research in the experimental sense, but rather they were used to inform the researcher’s general understanding of the ‘insider’s’ view of the context as a whole and to analyze the applicability of community-based approach and the best planning process to utilize. Therefore, in relation to the theme of the thesis, a community based perspective, the operating measure used to examine the applicability of the three premises would be “perspectives-based” input from key stake holders.

Key informants and key stakeholders were identified according to their central relation to the mill site's redevelopment. Each interview was conducted within a general

range of semi-structured open ended questions that were compiled prior to commencing the interviews and the questions were asked to the participants as applicable. These interviews also included a “snowball” technique that was used to widen my contact list of potential interviewees for further research.

I began this phase of my research by initially contacting via e-mail the Director of the Community Development Department for the City of Fort Bragg, Linda Ruffing. Through this correspondence we set up a date and time for an interview. At the time, Ruffing also gave me the phone number for a recently formed community group, North Coast Action (NCA). This group was organizing on a grass-roots level in order to draw attention to and advance public participation in the mill-site’s redevelopment. I then contacted North Coast Action (NCA) to set up an interview session. I used these initial interviews to widen my stakeholder pool by asking Ruffing and NCA members of other parties they thought I should be speaking with. This “snow-ball” component to the interview was very productive in that it gave me approximately fifteen other contacts to pursue.

I also initiated several “cold” contacts with certain groups and individuals that I considered to be potential key informants or who were potentially involved as stakeholders in some aspect of the situation. Again, definitions provided in the literature review provided guidance in identifying these possible contacts. For example, early works by Fagence, Coppock & Sewell, and Cherry provided guidance on identifying focus group representatives and productive participants for community visioning

exercises. This method, combined with rigorous follow-up contacts, also yielded positive results in terms of substantial individual interview material.

The following is a compiled list of questions used for the field research phase of this thesis. These questions follow the general outline of an open-ended, semi-structured interview format that I created as my proposed method. Many of these questions were either specifically factual or generally informative in nature therefore many of the questions were tailored for the purpose of applicability to the individual interview. For example, some questions turned out to be inappropriate to the interviewee because they had no involvement or little information on the topic of the question. In these cases, the questions were eliminated from the interview roster. In some cases, new questions were formed as the discussion of the interview proceeded. In these instances, both the question and the response were also included in the material used for the summary conclusion of this section. In some cases, the questions were answered in an indirect form through dialog with the interviewee. When this took place, I attempted to summarize a token response that I felt genuinely represented the participant's answer to the question.

The following is a representative list of questions that are grouped in generic clusters in order to display the tenor of discussion on specific topics within each respective individual interview.

#### Municipal Government

~ What are the prevailing concerns of City officials and how will these concerns be addressed through the planning process?

- ~ What do you foresee as being some of the some of the long-term issues the City needs to consider here?
- ~ Have you engaged any sociological research in order to better understand the civic component of this situation?
- ~ Does the City have planning preferences for the property? If so what?
- ~ Are there any steps being taken to leverage the City's influence on the possibilities of the site? If so what avenues are being taken?
- ~ What is the company's time-line for sale of the property and how might that affect the City's planning process?
- ~ How would Fort Bragg planners increase public participation in the planning process?

#### Public Participation

- ~ How do you see the public influencing the planning process?
- ~ What inspired these meetings?
- ~ What are the major sources of citizen's concern?
- ~ What sort of information should be made available to help citizens with understanding the details of the planning process?
- ~ Could you describe the community outreach methods you've employed in order to hear the community's opinions on the redevelopment.
- ~ What sort of participatory mechanisms and community visioning methods will be used in your group process?

### Stakeholders

- ~ Who do you see as being potential partners in the redevelopment?
- ~ Who would you identify as the central stakeholders?
- ~ How do you see different sections of the community being affected by the redevelopment?

### Collaboration

- ~ Are the relations between stakeholders combative or cooperative?
- ~ Can you think of dynamics that might exist between potential partners from outside the region?
- ~ How might you envision working with all the different stakeholders involved in this situation?
- ~ By what means might you envision a win/win situation for all stakeholders involved?

### Summary of Findings

Upon completing the field research phase of this thesis, I had established several useful contacts that could be utilized in order to better observe the progress of civic engagement and public participation involved in the mill-site's redevelopment.

By evaluating this process, I feel that I successfully achieved the goals that I set in selecting these field research methods. Again, the primary goal of these key informant and stakeholder interviews was two fold, to establish a close observation of the means

and methods of public participation taking place in the planning process and to better sample a community-based perspective of the mill-site's redevelopment. A secondary goal set in selecting these field research methods was to acquire a deeper understanding of the local context and the intricate nuances of the case in question. At issues here was my understanding of the relevant background information and community history involving Fort Bragg. This information set was required in properly analyzing the situation and in determining the potential applicability of a community-based approach to the mill-site redevelopment.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to distill the responses contained within these interviews into a compiled community-based perspective that I intend to serve as the summarized conclusion for this section. While I have decided that this summary conclusion will contain no direct quotations made by any particular person, I have taken the liberty of weaving these various voices together into one coherent expression that I feel could articulate a community-based perspective on the situation.

The interviews were uniquely valuable primarily because they increased my knowledge of the various points of view within the community, especially in relation to the subset of the community and interview pool that each individual interviewee represented. For example, some interviews were important in gaining an understanding of the inner workings of municipal government, such as the City's staffing capacity and its fiscal position and how these issues could effect its actively participating in the mill-site redevelopment. Other interviews were better suited to explore the various senses of

hope and fear, or promise and peril that exist among community members as they looked into their community's future.

This summary conclusion is not the result of a scientific sampling of the community but, I am confident that it does accurately reflect as a whole the sentiments of those I included in my interview pool.

Although many concerns remained salient throughout the interviews, there was a great deal of hope and aspiration that was expressed in regards to the possibilities envisioned for the future of the site. While community members unanimously valued retaining Fort Bragg's small town feel, they also looked forward to expanding the availability of affordable housing, well-paying employment, and cultural or recreational opportunities in the City. Proposals containing any of these ideas however, would need to focus on the issue of compatibility. Any new development would need to be properly integrated with the existing community. This would entail that the design of any redevelopment would be pedestrian friendly, supportive of existing businesses, and that both new neighborhoods and through traffic flowed well with existing patterns. Following this reasoning, many felt like any analysis of economic opportunities for the site would need to incorporate the goals that would be established by the community.

A common optimistic expression revolved around various quality of life issues, hopefully asserting that it is possible to plan a mix of uses that strengthens the community over all and enhances it aesthetically. It was felt by many that certain public benefit projects such as open space, coastal access, or a waste-water marsh for example would be key components in making Fort Bragg a better community. It was also felt that

various specific ideas such as a marine sciences lab, arts center, entrepreneurial incubator, forest products cooperative, or a sustainable-design conference center could potentially diversify the economic base in a way that would be a proper match for the City. On the other hand, many expressed a strong opposition to potential proposals that might include such uses as large-scale or big-box commercial development, exclusive resorts, luxury housing, a golf course, or a casino.

Many people expressed a pronounced concern for their community based on the realistic perception that there are a great many unknown and seemingly uncontrollable factors that will come into the picture at some point in the future. Particularly prominent among some of these fears was the specter of powerful "outside" influences forcing something upon the community that it doesn't want. To some degree, many commented on their apprehension over the sheer size of the site and the task of its redevelopment in relation to the strain that would be placed on the City government and staff to cope with the scale of the project. This concern did not seem to be based on a lack of confidence in their capabilities, but rather the concern focused on the issue of existing personnel capacity and the future workload required in administering the City's active involvement as a partner in the redevelopment. Respondents sensed that it would take a significant amount of policy level direction coming from the City government to counter what they perceived as likelihood that an "outside" developer might enter the scene with a preconceived agenda or an inappropriate proposal for the property. This concern was cited as a motivating factor for establishing a strategic planning process that would

analyze these issues among others and attempt to generate a vision for the site based on community-generated goals and objectives.

Another issue commonly expressed in relation to the issue of "outside" power influence dealt with a perceived "powerlessness" that many citizens felt is prevalent in the community. They felt that citizens and relevant decision makers might not operate from a position of genuine strength but instead might proceed based on a possible perception of dependency. It was widely felt that this perception of powerlessness (also termed by some citizens as 'disenfranchisement') could be due to the historic influence of Fort Bragg's "mill-town" socio-political dynamics. This aspect of the situation was cited as a fundamental reason why many felt that it was crucial to organize in order to enhance public participation in the planning process, specifically in establishing an inclusive space for dialog with the hope of developing a community wide vision for Fort Bragg's future. This train of thought maintained that much of what will unfold will depend on the strength and unity that coalesces in the community.

There was also a common sentiment expressed that showed a concern over potential political fragmentation or social conflict within the community over the policy level direction that might be chosen by key decision makers, whether inside or outside the community. Indeed, in regards to the various visions and possibilities for the site, many felt that a positive outcome to the situation would depend on structuring a process where people could feel that they have a voice and are actively involved in the planning process. While some asserted that the City should seek as much leverage as possible in the situation, others saw the need to find a balancing point where the property owner's

and the City's mutual interests lay. Some expressed a lack of confidence that this could be achieved unless a special arrangement was made to facilitate cooperation through a consensus building process regarding the creation of the Specific Plan. Many expressed a desire that some sort of a consensus building process take place because they saw this as the most stable grounds upon which the redevelopment could proceed without falling into potential conflict.

This notion of collaboration was also reinforced by those who called for the City and Georgia-Pacific to work jointly in order to initiate outreach to find developers that specialize in an approach that is appropriate for the situation, melding the community's vision with real blue prints. Some also saw collaboration as a wise move precisely because redevelopment will require multi-level approval and extensive coordination between jurisdictions and agencies for any proposal to proceed. Given the reoccurring opinion that there are so many parties involved in the situation, it would be best if everyone could work together in a cooperative environment.

## PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Upon completing the second phase of research for this thesis, key informant and stakeholder interviews, an interesting evolution of the research process began to take place. This evolution culminated in my emergent role as a participant observer through my own engagement in several forums in Fort Bragg during this period.

### North Coast Action

#### Background

Through the course of my various stakeholder interviews, I met the members of a local grass-roots citizen's group North Coast Action (NCA), who invited me to observe several of their public forums and group meetings on the mill-site redevelopment. My original intention was focused upon observing as an unobtrusive 'outside' researcher. The goal of this method was to achieve a non-intrusive presence that allowed me to observe public participation proceedings in Fort Bragg. While this method was initially successful, I did not originally take into consideration the effect of my presence on those I was researching.

#### Experience

Soon I became a subject of interest for community organizers who, as my research uncovered, were actively searching for useful methods and strategies that could be used to advance public participation in the planning process. These local organizers viewed my presence as a potentially valuable contribution in that I had access to cutting-

edge theories and methods relating to their mission ( as discussed in literature review). Furthermore, I wanted to evaluate a variety of the innovative ideas that were being generated by community members through visioning processes in Fort Bragg.

This desire for knowledge exchange led to my role evolving into a participant observer. I began to discuss with NCA the policy level approach to community development that is articulated in my thesis. I provided recommendations regarding their questions on grass-roots strategies that could be employed to advance NCA's mission of transparency, inclusivity, and participatory democracy in the planning process, all themes of this thesis.

This method, as a participant observer with North Coast Action, culminated with my participation in several public forums they hosted in order to generate general awareness and to garner community feed back. First, I offered to give a presentation in May of 2003 outlining my thesis, focusing on a community-based approach to the redevelopment and providing representative examples of this approach, see Appendix F. Next, when NCA decided to host a community visioning exercise in June of 2003, they invited me to help them facilitate the forum where I was able to use my skills and experience to assist their group process, see Appendix E.. Finally, NCA invited me to give a presentation in September of 2003 specifically on the potential applicability of a collaborative Charter method for the redevelopment planning process. Subsequently, NCA asked me to approach the Institute for the Study of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ISADR), (for whom I worked at the time) with a request to develop a formal proposal to establish a collaborative charter involving the relevant stakeholders in the mill site

redevelopment, see Appendix H. As the culmination of my participation in these events, NCA invited me to give a presentation in September of 2003 specifically to describe the potential applicability of a collaborative Charter method as contained in this proposal by ISADR for the redevelopment planning process. The presentation of this proposal concluded the experiential component of this thesis.

### Conclusion

This role as a participant observer ended up serving my research goals well, in that I was able to evaluate the various individual responses of both NCA group members and community participants to the innovative theories and methods that I brought into the context through my own involvement. While I was informing myself by listening to their hopes and fears, they were able to inform themselves by hearing about my case-studies and experiences.

City of Fort Bragg

### Background

At the end of 2002, the City of Fort Bragg anticipated of the permanent closure of the GP mill. In preparation of a long-term redevelopment process for the property, the city government created a new land use designation for the site as a part of Fort Bragg's ten year general plan. This new designation stipulated that any attempt to change the land use or zoning designation would require a comprehensive full site planning process for the entire property, called a Specific Plan.

This specific plan would involve extensive public comment and exhaustive studies on various redevelopment options for the community to consider. During this period, the Fort Bragg City Council desired to provide leadership to the community in scoping reuse options for the mill-site. The Council's primary stated goal during this period was to guide the City's strategic planning process in order to identify the community's priorities and to strengthen the City's economy through the identification of business development opportunities that matched those priorities. In repeated public declarations regarding the mill-site planning process, the City expressed its view that the future of the Georgia-Pacific property is uniquely and integrally linked to the future of the Fort Bragg Community. As such, the transition of the property's use as a unique opportunity to plan for and implement a strategic vision which will define the community's future.

Early in the process the City established several priority outcomes of the planning process;

- ~ Assure the availability of living wage jobs for Fort Bragg residents;
- ~ Provide opportunities for development of a broad range of housing, and particularly affordable housing;
- ~ Promote coastal access, use and enjoyment for residents and visitors; enhance and diversify the community economy; and
- ~ maintain and promote the historic identity of Fort Bragg.

As repeatedly emphasized by Planning Director Linda Ruffing, the focus of the City's planning effort will be on community scoping and economic development

strategy planning with the expectation that the planning efforts of the property owner and the City's visioning process can be woven together into the broader framework of planning for a stable and suitable future for Fort Bragg.

Specifically, the City's intention was that the concepts and principles developed in the City's planning process would help set the stage for preparation of a Specific Plan for the mill Site. The Specific Plan would identify future uses and infrastructure requirements, and establish development standards for the property. The Specific Plan, together with General Plan, Zoning and Local Coastal Program amendments, would have to be approved by the City Council in order for the Mill Site to be redeveloped.

### Experience

Toward this end, the City undertook a host of steps to realize this goal. The City sponsored a number of work shops to review the planning process to date and to receive additional input on economic development analysis that identified the regional context and market influences that will shape development constraints and opportunities. The City received reports on Fort Bragg and mill site economic development strategies, presentations on community-based planning principles, and the results of community discussion groups on conceptual land use options.

At the culmination of the this phase of the planning process, the City prepared a collection of community-based planning principles derived from verbal and written public comments gathered at various focus groups and public meetings. Community

surveys analyzed by Marie Jones Consulting demonstrated support for the following themes and general concepts;

Environmental Resources; “Development should be clustered to reduce the amount of infrastructure needed and to preserve or restore natural habitat areas, which will create less of an impact on the land and the shoreline.”

Physical Development Patterns; “A mix of land uses is needed to provide the City with a balance of needed housing, jobs, open space and services. The adjacencies between these uses are key to creating a cohesive final development.”

Economic Vitality; “New development should have positive revenue generation relative to costs of services, operation, and maintenance of infrastructure. It should create the right balance of jobs, housing, and amenities that positively impact the City, rather than strain the City’s limited resources.”

In addition, several of the following specific community desires were commonly mentioned;

- Explore the Feasibility of establishing a Performing Arts Center.
- Encourage livable Communities Concepts in New Mill site Specific Plan.
- Explore the Feasibility of a Marsh to Enhance the City’s Waste water treatment Facility.
- Work with the Mill site Developer to attract an institutional use such as a College or Marine research center.
- Increase the City’s capacity to undertake economic development and Mill site reuse efforts.

- Increase availability of affordable housing that is compatible and integrated with the existing community patterns.
- Ensure complete remediation of toxics at the site.
- Work with G-P, the State Coastal Conservancy, and others to pursue public acquisition of portions of the Mill Site for Coastal access and recreation purposes.
- Establish a collaborative planning effort with G-P and other stakeholders to help guide all aspects of the planning process.
- Identifying infrastructure and public facility costs and related financing options.

These sets of community-based principles generally guided the City's subsequent negotiations with G-P, its interactions and collaborations with external stakeholders, as well as its engagement with other agencies regarding open space acquisition, toxics remediation, and the promotion of specific development projects.

Also, during this time-period several elected officials whom I met through the course of my research expressed an interest in hearing the conclusion of my work as soon as it was completed. Upon conclusion, I contacted the City Council with a copy of a presentation I had tailored specifically for them, see Appendix D. This presentation outlined the three premises of a community-based approach to the mill-site's redevelopment and detailed various participatory mechanisms that they could consider employing throughout the planning process. Following this presentation in February of 2004, I provided the Council with a letter containing four specific final process

recommendations and a brief, informative discussion on the formation of a stakeholder collaborative according to a Charter process for them to consider, see Appendix G.

### Conclusion

This component of my participation in the first phase of planning events was very valuable in that I was able to observe their reception of my presentation and to analyze the feedback Council members had to offer on a collaborative approach to the planning process. Using this research method, I was able to formulate a better understanding as to municipal preference for cooperation, as well as what I perceived as potential sources of resistance to collaboration. It was clear that in relation to certain past conflicts with developers in Fort Bragg (e.g. Affinito vs. the City of Fort Bragg) City Council members were very interested in ways that they could avoid the possibility of expensive disputes in the future. On the other hand, my interactions with some City Council members led me to believe that they felt like standard operating procedures (specifically, the common method of principle party negotiations between the municipality and a developer) would be sufficient in securing a successful outcome.

This presentation to the City Council was also useful for me professionally in that it helped me refine my own ability to explain the benefits of collaboration to the particular audience I am speaking to. For example, the benefits of collaboration would be different for Georgia-Pacific or any future developer than they would be for civic groups or other interests involved. As my research uncovered and as my experience has shown, each party involved in a collaborative process has unique motivation for participation.

As the research, participation observation, and experiential components of this thesis do not extend beyond the application of a community-based approach analysis, the initial phases of public participation in the planning process, and the presentation of thesis recommendations the author is obliged at this point to end the discussion of my participation in the City of Fort Bragg's actions regarding the mil-site planning process. In concluding this section, the author found that the City followed a majority of the community-based planning principles described in this thesis, while asserting its role as the public authority responsible for advancing the community's interests. The sole critique this thesis offers regarding the overall structure and the general direction of the City's focus on the redevelopment planning process is that it did not establish a formalized, long-term stakeholder collaborative. Indeed, the City's emphasis and attitude was one of a collaborative and community-based nature and many fruitful relationships and potential projects emerged as a result of the City's inclusive approach. However, the municipal leadership did not believe the formal collaborative charter process was necessary and, in the author's analysis, tended toward an existing traditional pattern of principle party negotiations and more classic participatory mechanisms. Only time, the unfolding of events and further analysis may shed light on the wisdom of this decision.

## THESIS CONCLUSION

The overarching theme of this thesis has been focused upon a policy-level approach that I am recommending be adopted by the Fort Bragg city government. As I have outlined, this recommended "community-based" approach would serve to craft the foundational guiding principles by which a Specific Plan would be created and then evaluated prior to its being submitted for review and approval by the public and relevant authorities. This approach would acknowledge the public's preeminent interest in the redevelopment and would require extensive civic engagement efforts by employing the various participatory mechanisms previously discussed. In order for this situation to produce positive results for all parties involved, I am advising the City Council establish a cooperative working environment between stakeholders, thereby tapping into the collaborative potential that could exist if an appropriate process could be sponsored. As I have described, such a process does exist in the form of a stakeholder collaborative that could be constituted via a Charter type structure. This concluding recommendation focuses on the establishment of a collaborative Charter that could be used to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders on the creation of a Specific Plan for the site into the future.

My recommendation of the establishment of a collaborative Charter requires some brief elaboration in order to better understand its potential applicability to this situation. The Charter is an organizational method used to constitute an official facilitated partnership agreement amongst a diverse group of interdependent stakeholders with the

purpose of mediating collaboration and cooperative problem solving according to a consensus-based decision making process. Simply put, the Charter is a formal agreement between parties to work together cooperatively toward a common goal, to mediate potential disagreements along the way, and to ultimately reach decisions according to consensus. The overriding purpose of a Charter is the creation of a lasting, viable solution or proposal that is acceptable to all parties and can be effectively implemented through rigorous legal and public review. In my assessment, it would be the perfect compliment for a long-term planning process involving multiple public policy issues, such as the mill-site redevelopment. It is best suited for complex, multi-party situations, wherein a multitude of delicate issues and involved interests will need to be fairly balanced for a successful outcome.

Essentially, my analysis for this recommendation is that it is in the best interest of the City, the citizens, G-P, and any potential developer or relevant stakeholder involved in the mill-site's redevelopment to work together in an officially recognized, concerted and consistent manor and a Charter offers the means to do so. Establishing a Charter would represent a proactive approach toward building the relationships necessary in finding a delicate balance for the creation of a Specific Plan that every one can be proud of and profit from.

As previously discussed, there are several likely benefits to adopting a collaborative Charter in this situation: the current and future City Council would receive a carefully mediated process that could mitigate citizen concerns and implement a viable strategic vision, both G-P and any potential developer would benefit from a process that

ensures a healthy working relationship with the City and other stakeholders, thereby reducing the exposure of their investment to the risks and costs involved in a complex situation such as this, citizens would have visible and tangible access to a planning process that could ensure constructive participation, state agencies and other relevant entities would appreciate an approachable framework of cooperation for their potential involvement.

Charters are most often initiated by one or more key stakeholders who realize a situation of mutual interdependence and understand the many benefits of cooperation. A Charter operates according to the mission, agenda, and time-line set by its participants, yet the format and forums are most often designed and facilitated by a neutral and independent organization that specializes in moderating public processes. The meetings of a Charter often progress by either a linear or an accordion format, depending on what the situation and the participants require or desire to achieve.

Some likely benefits of a collaborative Charter in this situation would be; the current and future City Council would receive a carefully mediated process that could mitigate citizen concerns and successfully implement a viable strategic vision. Both Georgia-Pacific and any potential developer would benefit from a front-end process that ensures a healthy working relationship with the City and other stakeholders, thereby reducing the exposure of their investment to the risks and costs involved in complex situations such as this. Citizens would have visible and tangible access a planning process that could ensure constructive participation. State agencies and other relevant

entities would appreciate an approachable framework of cooperation for their required or potential involvement in either a review or partnership capacity.

In sum, a collaborative Charter is a method that is meant to ensure the creation of a quality product that depends on the consent of multiple parties, in this case the Specific Plan required for the redevelopment of the mill-site. It is my assessment that a collaborative Charter would be a perfect compliment for this extremely intricate situation and the delicate times to come. It is my recommendation that the City of Fort Bragg continue its current cooperation with Georgia-Pacific by pursuing the creation of a joint developer solicitation package, which is listed as an option in the adopted “Statement of Mutual Intent” and could be initiated upon the completion of the City’s Phase I preliminary planning activities. As a prominent component of this potential developer solicitation package, I recommend an extension and expansion of the existing cooperative environment by sponsoring the creation of a stakeholder collaborative or advisory council to help guide the creation of a Specific Plan by a consensus building process known as the Charter. This strategy would represent a natural, formal extension of the current “Statement of Mutual Intent” and it would maximize the City’s cooperative influence on the creation of a Specific Plan by proactively establishing a working relationship with any future developer(s).

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## APPENDIX A

### Human Subjects Review Proposal

Neil Peacock  
Human Subjects Review  
Interview Proposal

#### Thesis Abstract

The Georgia-Pacific mill site in Fort Bragg California encompasses one third of the city limits. The mill has closed, the site will be cleaned, cleared, and sold to a developer who will make plans with the city to redevelop the property. From “community-based” perspective, there are several concerns about the outcome of the redevelopment. These concerns should be addressed through the focus of the planning process. If a “community-based” perspective is integrated within the planning process, then there are certain options and alternatives that Fort Bragg planners could look at and choose from in order to address the concerns and issues that arise from the mill site redevelopment. I will discuss potential redevelopment issues and list various options and alternatives that could be used to address them.

#### Interview Process

While I will not be experimenting with any subjects, I will be asking interviewees about their personal feelings, opinions, experiences, or subjective perspectives. I will be using an open-ended, semi-structured format to interview key informants and I will include a release of confidentiality form in the event that I decide

that any direct quotation will be used for the thesis. These questions will be used to gain a better understanding about the planning process currently underway in Fort Bragg. These questions will serve to brief my research on the actions and activities that citizens and Fort Bragg planners will undertake in relation to the mill site redevelopment. I will be conducting interviews with approximately 20 key informants who are identified as stakeholders in the redevelopment. This group is comprised of individuals such as; city planners, community development professionals, G-P representative, non-profit organizers, county officials, local citizens etc. A list of general questions will be compiled and applied to each individual interview as appropriate.

#### Sample Potential Interview Questions

- ~ What sort of participatory mechanisms does the Fort Bragg planning process include?
- ~ How would Fort Bragg planners increase public participation in the planning process?
- ~ What sort of community visioning methods will be included in the planning process?
- ~ What proposals has your organization come up with to address this particular issue?
- ~ How has the county responded to issues relating to the G-P mill site development?
- ~ What is the company's time-line for sale of the property?
- ~ Does the Company have a heritage trust for culturally significant properties?

~ What are the predominate concerns of City officials?

~ How will these plans be addressed through the planning process?

Other questions of this factual or informative nature will be tailored for individual interviews.

APPENDIX B

CONFIDENTIALITY RELEASE

Neil Peacock  
Environment & Community Graduate Program  
Human Subjects Review; Consent to Relinquish Confidentiality

I understand and consent to the fact that Neil Peacock, in the process of investigating his thesis, will be asking me questions about my organization, my official position, or my personal observations in relation to public participation in the redevelopment of the Georgia-Pacific mill site in Fort Bragg, CA.

I understand that my participation in any interview with Neil is completely voluntary and I will not be receiving payment or compensation for any involvement with his thesis work. I consent to his using the content of any interview, including but not limited to my comments, in any publicly available works that he might produce, including but not limited to his thesis. I consent to my comments being made publicly available and I relinquish any interest in confidentiality in relation to the interviews I participate in with Neil Peacock.

Signature X -----

Date X -----

## APPENDIX C

### FORT BRAGG CITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION

1/12/04

To: The City Council Of Fort Bragg

From: Neil Peacock, Humboldt State University Graduate

Re: Presentation to Council on Master's thesis and the Charter process, a multi-party collaborative planning process.

Fort Bragg City Council,

As many members of the City Council are aware, I have been working for many months on my Master's thesis for Humboldt State's "Community and the Environment" graduate program.

This program focuses its in depth study on the real challenges and potential opportunities facing communities in situations similar to that of the City of Fort Bragg in its current context. Through the rigors of this program and by extensive research and independent training in mediating consensus on complex public policy, as well as through my involvement thus far in civic forums on the mill-site's future, I have reach the point at which I would like to present to the City Council an outline of my thesis, including a description of a multi-party collaborative planning process called the Charter. Several Council members have expressed an interest in hearing my presentation and I believe it would be especially useful at this juncture in deciding on a process with which to carry forward.

As a synopsis of my presentation for the City Council;

The thesis is written from a specific theoretical perspective, what I call a “community-based” approach to the mill-site’s redevelopment. I will discuss this approach, which is oriented around three central themes; 1.) The public interest 2.) Civic engagement

3.) Collaborative potential. I will also supply examples to demonstrate this approach in action. The presentation will then explore several innovative and successful methods used to foster genuine public participation in the planning process. I will conclude the presentation with an in depth look at a collaborative planning process specifically geared toward complex situations such as the mill-site redevelopment. In this discussion on the organization of a Charter Process, I will also include a brief list of contacts that are experienced with facilitating this method if the City Council wishes to consider it further.

As many Fort Bragg citizens and members of City Council strongly believe, this situation presents many great opportunities for the community’s future. At the same time, the City Council currently faces the substantial challenge of structuring a sound and equitable process in order to ensure that it is well handled. In a delicate situation such as this, with a variety of stake-holders interest involved and the possibility

of community contention, I believe the organization of a Charter process would best serve the City's long-term interests in this regards. I would be grateful for the opportunity to present this idea before the council.

Sincerely,

Neil Peacock

(707) 845-5880

npp1@humboldt.edu

APPENDIX D

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

2/16/04

To: The City Council of Fort Bragg

From: Neil Peacock  
Humboldt State University Graduate  
“Community and the Environment” Masters Program

Re: Summary of Recommendations for the Georgia-Pacific mill-site

Redevelopment

Fort Bragg City Council,

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the City Council for inviting me to give a presentation on my thesis before the Council and the community. Having this opportunity to translate concepts and theory into a real-world context for practical application has been a unique opportunity for me, and I want to express my genuine appreciation.

For the sake of brevity, I would like to offer a concise summary of my recommendations for the City Council to consider through this preliminary phase of the planning process. I understand that the Council will continue forward with its established yet flexible process and provide direction according to its own best judgment. I simply offer these suggestions for consideration in enhancing the City’s goals civic engagement and the implementation of a strategic vision for the Community’s future.

1. Direct the MIG team to establish at least three participatory workshops or Charettes to actively engage citizens in the process of creating of the City's Economic Development Strategy Plan, Land Use Framework Study, and Infrastructure Analysis.

- This would further the City's goal of directly involving citizens, developing a strategic vision through community workshops, and could potentially assist in the identification of areas where additional analysis is needed or where innovative approaches might be suitable.

2. As a part of the City's strategic visioning, direct the MIG team to highlight a specific assessment of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

- This community assessment is a common step in analyzing approaches to public policy and is used as an educational outreach tool by informing the public of its current situation.

3. As a part of the Action Plan that the MIG team will be creating, place a special emphasis on creative feasibility recommendations for public benefit projects, community quality enhancement strategies, and the innovative or collaborative projects that emerge from the City's strategic visioning process.

- This focus could serve both as an implementation road map for the City's vision and as an bridging tool that could be used for partnership building and future collaborative projects.

4. Continue cooperation with G-P by pursuing the creation of a developer solicitation package, in which I recommend the creation of an stakeholder collaborative

or advisory council to help guide the creation of a Specific Plan by a consensus building process known as the Charter.

- This strategy would represent a natural, formal extension of the current “Statement of Mutual Intent”. It would both maximize the City’s cooperative influence on a Specific Plan by proactively establishing a working relationship with future developer(s), and provide an attractive component of a bid package that might increase the site’s premium for G-P.

Thank you again for our time together. I hope these recommendations may prove to be useful to the Council in the delicate times to come.

Sincerely,

Neil Peacock