

Turning a Justice Building into Building Justice

Our 1903 Jail and the County Finance building (formerly the County Courthouse) are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and represent times gone by. The 1903 Jail was built with quality materials and thousands of hours of expert labor, with artisans chiseling granite into beautiful blocks intended to last forever, like the castles of England. The 1944 Jail Annex was built with reinforced concrete and provides a lot of space in a building arguably built to withstand attacks during WWII, a period when materials and labor were hard to come by. A window into the days of America's war effort.

Several times over the last 30 years the issue of demolishing the Jail and the Jail Annex has come up, and each time the wrecker's ball has been stopped, as people worked to save the buildings and find community uses. But though the Jail and the Annex weren't demolished, they weren't put to good use either. The County continued to allow them to deteriorate, simply using them for storing old files and junk, and so laying the groundwork for saying that they were just an unsalvageable eyesore, and needed to be demolished. The Jail and Annex, however, are structurally sound and far from unsalvageable, and there has been continued interest by the development community in rehabbing and repurposing the buildings.

The Architectural Preservation Foundation needs your help to save the Jail and Annex now and put them to new and productive use. We have been ordered by the court to come up with **\$13,000 by Sept. 10, 2021** to pay for the Administrative Record. If we fail to meet this goal, our case will be dismissed and demolition will proceed. PLEASE help us by linking to <https://go.rallyup.com/historicjail> to donate to our continued efforts!

One proposal is by a developer who is willing to fund the project himself. The first part of the proposal is the renovation of the 1903 Jail, preserving its historic architecture.

The second part of the proposal is for the 1944 Annex to be shortened by half, with a dining garden patio on its roof. The ground where the Annex had been removed would be turned into a 3500 sq. ft. Civic Park across the street from the new Administration Building. Imagine live music wafting down from the roof patio to the park area below on a warm Saturday afternoon.

The two floors of remaining space in the 1944 Annex would be turned into a Cultural Arts Center. Community non-profits have been found that would coordinate exhibits, speakers and events focusing on different cultures and their arts, effective communication between groups, and improving understanding to help bridge the divisions in our society. This activity would be funded by the non-profits' grant writing efforts, as well by seed money from the County that otherwise would have been spent on demolition.

This picture is a draft of what it would look like to replace 1944 metal screened windows with bottle glass and other beautifications:



Martinez is not alone in lacking venues for the arts. Artists, civic groups as well as commissions struggle to find space for the arts in our county. As a measure of the problem, funding for the Contra Costa Arts & Culture Commission is less than 15% of the funding supplied to arts commissions in surrounding counties. Yet the County has budgeted millions to tear down the Jail and Annex that could help address this problem. **The time and need are now.** Please contact the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors with emails and calls and tell them you stand with us. Demolition bidding has started. NOW is the LAST chance!

Cheryll Grover

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Here's how to contact your representatives:

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