



COUNTY PLANS IGNORE CITIZEN INPUT

On Wednesday night, Nov. 17th, the County revealed for the first time, to the citizens of Martinez and to the City Council, the details of their plans to demolish 2 historic jails as part of the plans for their new County Campus.

Beyond the demolition presented in the County's animated video, they also revealed that food service, and a bit of County-only parking, would be provided in the new 651 Pine St. 3-story building, so County workers would never have to leave the Campus to go downtown.

There was also hardly any discussion regarding lost historic resources, other than saying a few bricks would be saved for part of the plaza and that there would be a story board.

Here's a story board in Susana Park. It's not clear what the story is, or was, but if this is what happens to a display in a park as public as Susana, it's hard to imagine the proposed 1903 Jail/1944 Annex history display surviving in an area as isolated and removed from the downtown, with no activity at night, on weekends or during holidays, as the County's proposed no-Jail plaza. Suggestions from the County on how to prevent vandalism, trash, graffiti and encampments were also not forthcoming. Have they looked into that at all?

One member of the City Council likes the idea of a plaza for music – although this has had NO public input, and we have an amphitheater for that use at the marina already. It sounds nice, but there are NO businesses in that area that would benefit from large numbers of people coming to a dead end area on the edge of downtown. We would get the downside of visitors and



their litter, and the City investing in public works upkeep and barricades and policing, without the benefit of more foot traffic for downtown businesses.

The APFCCC has proposed the County deed the 1903 building to those willing to pay to save it (instead of the County keeping it and charging the taxpayers to demolish it), and who have developed a detailed reuse plan as a restaurant. This would bring activities and people into a local business in the new Civic Center after 5 PM and on weekends. It would help draw Main St into the new campus, and help integrate the increased County presence into our downtown. Martinez has worked over the years to create events to bring people *TO downtown businesses*, not *AWAY from downtown businesses*. The County would still have plenty of room in the plaza for its workers.

Early on, the County told us **THEY WANTED TO SAVE THE 1903 JAIL**. We want to hold them to their word. We are trying to save the **ONLY** free-standing, Mooser II designed jail (see **MORE ABOUT THE JAIL**, below), which is here, in Martinez, California. A judge recently ruled we have more time to collect the donations we need to continue our legal effort to require the County to abide by Environmental and CEQA law. *That means there is still time to hear from you and people you know!* We hope you will join us!

To help support our efforts, please consider donating and visiting: <https://go.rallyup.com/aed19f/Campaign/Details> or by check to~ **APFCCC at P.O.Box 84, Martinez, CA 94553**
Please Sign our Petition: <https://chng.it/GTWRqMQ5rn>

And SHARE!

Email: apfofccc@gmail.com

"News from my town in California is painfully familiar. We must have county and city governments that are in support of preservation. Yes, towns must evolve. We agree. However, our history is our DNA. Once it's gone it's gone forever."

~ J. Clifton, Martinez resident in support of our Save the 1903 Jail.

MORE ABOUT THE JAIL



Martinez has been the county seat of Contra Costa for 170 years, and has presented itself as “Historic Martinez” for the last 50 of those years. The signage and marketing of “Historic Martinez” helps tourism, and bolsters the downtown economy.

In its early years, Contra Costa struggled to find the money to build proper government buildings. It was the Wild, Wild West, with saloons and outlaws and with jails often made of wood. As population and established development grew, funding for the 1901 Courthouse (now known as the Finance Building) was finally raised, and, by 1903, the original stone jail that today sits behind our Finance Building, had been built and was “open for business.” The same hand-chiseled, quality granite was used for both buildings. The County government buildings in Martinez’ Historic District are deeply rooted in the history of our town.

The architect, William Mooser Sr. (“Mooser II”), clearly designed and crafted these structures with a deep affinity for, and love of, the architecture of his day. It is especially amazing that this level of inspiration and care went into a jail. The deep, arched granite windows and doors, the number and pattern of windows used, even the antique railing of the stairway inside, show the high value given to elegance, and not merely to functionality, in the design of the Jail, a quality shared by the many other Mooser family buildings.



Photo: Pioneer Woolen Mills by Ken Lund

[Above] National Register #82002249 Pioneer Woolen Mills and D. Ghirardelli Company, 900 North Point Street, Built 1862. The Pioneer Woolen Mill, located in Ghirardelli Square, was designed by Swiss-born architect William Sebastian Mooser ("Mooser I"), and is one of San Francisco's oldest buildings.

From this one extant building, came the Mooser dynasty in San Francisco. Mooser II, a son, was the first appointed architect and building code author for San Francisco, and designed many buildings throughout California, many of which are among the most valued landmarks of government design and use in the state. Mooser II and *his* son would go on to build the Santa Barbara Courthouse complex.

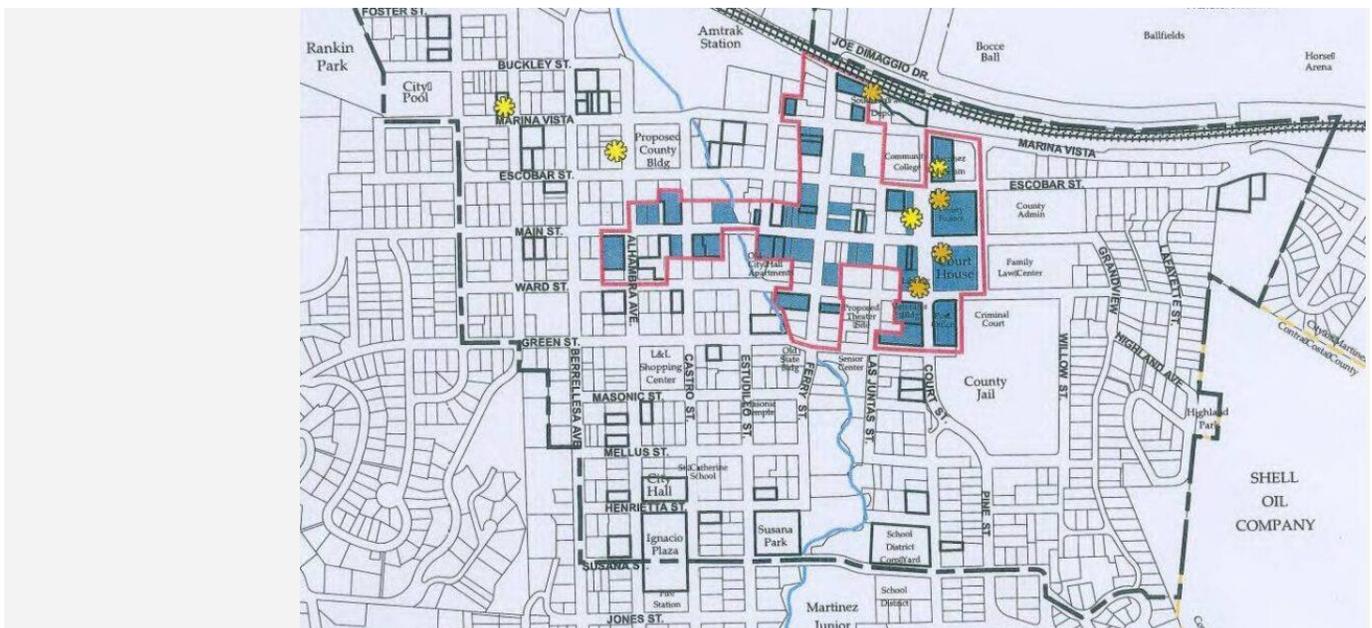
An excerpt of a letter to the County from Architect Robert L. Ooley, FAIA, 3-Diamond Fellow states, "In addition to your jail being designed by this venerable architectural dynasty, it is one of the only remaining free-standing jails of the period in California. Mooser II was able to express a highly sophisticated Palladian-based architectural design while also responding to the needs of jail operations that included separate "cells for women and those with mental illness."

In the late 1950's, the County removed the cupola of the Courthouse, only to find that they had erred in the engineering analysis and that it would have continued to last for over 100 years, just like the jail has. The picture below shows what we could be seeing today if the County hadn't acted rashly:



The [Architectural Preservation Foundation of Contra Costa County](#) has been working for over four years to save the 1903 Jail that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Public sentiment and the economic health of Martinez have not gotten the attention they deserve in the debate about the County's new Campus.

As had happened before, the Board of Supervisors in 2015 put the jail buildings back on the chopping block. This time it was the APFCCC who was able to intervene to get time to find someone with financing to take over the 1903 Jail and 1944 Annex.



Downtown historic resources in Martinez, Courtesy City of Martinez, 2021

The APFCCC has found developers with over 100 years' experience preserving historic buildings, and who are willing to spend their own money to save the 1903 jail. They will preserve its exterior and restore as much of the interior as possible, including earthquake retrofitting with no exterior bolting. Their plan is to turn it into a restaurant with historical displays inside. The Jail's sister building, the old

Courthouse, has recently been fully restored by the County and continues to be used as the County Finance Building.



The restaurant's planned historical displays might feature such things as the 1944 Port Chicago disaster ([Port Chicago Disaster](#)), which was a major and tragic WWII home front event in Contra Costa. The 1903 Jail has survived many disturbances and earthquakes since its construction over a century ago, and will continue to preserve the history, the DNA, of Martinez, for centuries to come, if it is not destroyed by the County.

HELP US SAVE THE JAIL!

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