

Cyndie Martel

From: Jeff Koblick <jeffkoblick@icloud.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 4, 2026 10:48 AM
To: CouncilAll; Mathew Salter; Teri Dowling; Julie McMillan; C. William Kircher; Elizabeth Robbins; Christa Johnson; Cyndie Martel
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Town of Ross Master Plan - renovate or tear down and rebuild?

Dear Julie, Bill, Terri, Elizabeth and Mat,

First of all, thank you for all of your volunteer time and energy on behalf of our community. I am a 40 year resident of Ross and a real estate professional who specializes in the renovation of older buildings.

Our real estate investment company renovated the Good Earth Natural Foods store in Fairfax, along with many millions of dollars of other renovations of large office buildings and apartments in Marin and Sonoma counties over the last 40 years.

As you know, much has changed since 2021 when the Ross Master Plan was adopted. According to the California Construction Cost Index (CCCI), construction costs have increased 45% (Index 10,300/7090) since 2021, meaning construction costs for the current Master Plan will be in excess of \$30M, even if construction started today, and will be \$35M - \$40M by the time construction actually begins.

This cost would require bond financing. Given the strong level of Ross resident's support for renovating the existing Town structures and keeping the option of bringing back the Fire Dept., getting a 2/3 majority for a Town bond is unachievable.

Renovate or rebuild?

We have toured the current Town of Ross structures along with Architects, Engineers and General Contractors to see if the Ross Town buildings can be renovated, versus torn down and replaced. In our experience, buildings can be renovated at 50% or less of the cost of tearing down and rebuilding new structures.

Our experience is that keeping the existing buildings foundations, utility connections, strong redwood structures and valuable tile roofs save millions of dollars in costs. In addition, a renovation does not require a CEQA approval, which will be costly and delay the project at least a year or two.

Architectural and engineering plans show that keeping the existing structures can provide ample space for all Town functions, including keeping a fire department location, all for 50% of the cost of tearing down and rebuilding. If this were my property, I would absolutely renovate!

Is it valuable to have an Option to have a Ross Fire Dept.?

Common sense and all studies indicate that it will take minutes longer for a fire department response to go the additional 1.8 miles from the San Anselmo Fire Station or from the Kentfield Fire Station, if they are available.

For us older folks, a few minutes makes a difference. I have recently had 3 close friends whose experiences highlight this fact. One had a heart attack while riding a bike in Nicasio just a minute away from the Nicasio Fire Station. He received immediate care and is 100% recovered. Another had a stroke

in a remote area of Novato and lost some use of her hand and leg. A third friend had a stroke near Modesto and is in a coma.

Some say the cost to operate a fire station will be too high, but many other small communities seem to be able to support a local fire station? Ross already contributes \$2.7M per year to RVFD. Also, Ross financially supported a local fire station for many decades, why not in the future?

At the very least, we have an opportunity to keep the option open for a Ross Fire Station facility in the future. And even if the cost is higher, if it is you, your family or neighbors who has a stroke or heart attack, do you want to be the one to say we saved some money at the expense of a life?

Others say Paramedics will provide ample and speedy service. In my 65 years in Marin County, it has always been my experience that Fire Dept. responders are faster than Paramedics. Fire Departments are better funded and staffed. This is especially true when the Ross Valley Paramedics have such a wide area to service (Larkspur to Fairfax). Moreover, the Ross Valley Paramedics is dependent on other Town's financial participation to operate.

Conclusion

In talking with neighbors and acquaintances in Town, 70-80% are in favor of renovating the existing Town structures and keeping the option of bringing back the Fire Dept. I trust you will survey the Town to verify what the residents prefer and act accordingly, or you should go ahead with a Town referendum vote on such important decisions.

It would be reckless of the Town Council to stay the course on the Master Plan and go ahead with submitting a bond measure, which by all indications will be soundly defeated, causing more delays and additional costs.

Best regards and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2026!

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