

Memo

To: Parks Forward Commission
From: Kathryn Welch Howe
Date: March 17, 2014
Re: What We Can Do Now With State Parks' Historic Resources

The accompanying powerpoint slides illustrate the outstanding historic properties in CA State Parks and their value as assets to the Parks and to their communities. I am here to talk about what can happen now and what can be completed in the next twelve months. I recommend that in the next year, the Commission urge State Parks to complete 3 of the 6 Adaptive Use Pilot Projects using partnerships. The Commission also can urge State Parks to complete a comprehensive system-wide survey of historic properties that can be preserved and used based upon a strategic, phased program.

The opportunity in State Parks is as strong as I have seen in my experience. A revitalized Custom House can become a magnet for the 2 million visitors in Monterey. The use of historic outbuildings at Sugar Pine Point can contribute to the Park's recreation and special events programs as distinctive historic vacation rentals. The historic church buildings at Marshall Gold Discovery can become a center of events for the Park and the Coloma community. There are partners available in each of these communities who can have these properties up and running within the year.

The Department can employ preservation investment tools already in use for hundreds of successful historic properties: regulatory certainty, the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the CA State Historical Building

Code, net leases, and experienced rehabilitation professionals (architects, engineers, investors). For the 3 Pilot Projects, the Department has already completed Historic Structure Reports and Market and Use Assessments. These steps can demonstrate both the preservation leadership of the State Parks and its merits as a partner.

Concurrently, State Parks can complete a survey of all State Parks to assess the reuse potential for the historic properties in terms of Park plans and community conditions. The purpose of the hands-on survey is to identify the network to be built of restored, reused buildings and to recommend a phased, prioritized approach to attract partners, and to get the buildings operating and in service. This network of lodging, retail, event spaces and visitor services will lead to a “brand” for CA State Parks as an innovative, ecologically sensitive property steward with dynamic, authentic, affordable facilities, appealing to existing and new audiences.

The result of this work is that State Parks will have a road map, a blueprint and partners to rehabilitate and reuse its highly significant historic properties. Doing this will save buildings while creating distinctive services and authentic places which appeal to the audiences Parks wishes to attract. As in all transactions, there will be many details to be worked out-- working out the respective relationship between the Parks and partners, ensuring quality, developing a Brand. None of these are deal-breakers, just the normal problem solving. The opportunity and results far outweigh the challenges.

Kathryn Welch Howe
KWH Associates, Inc.
[1-310-995-7721](tel:1-310-995-7721)
khowe.kwh@gmail.com