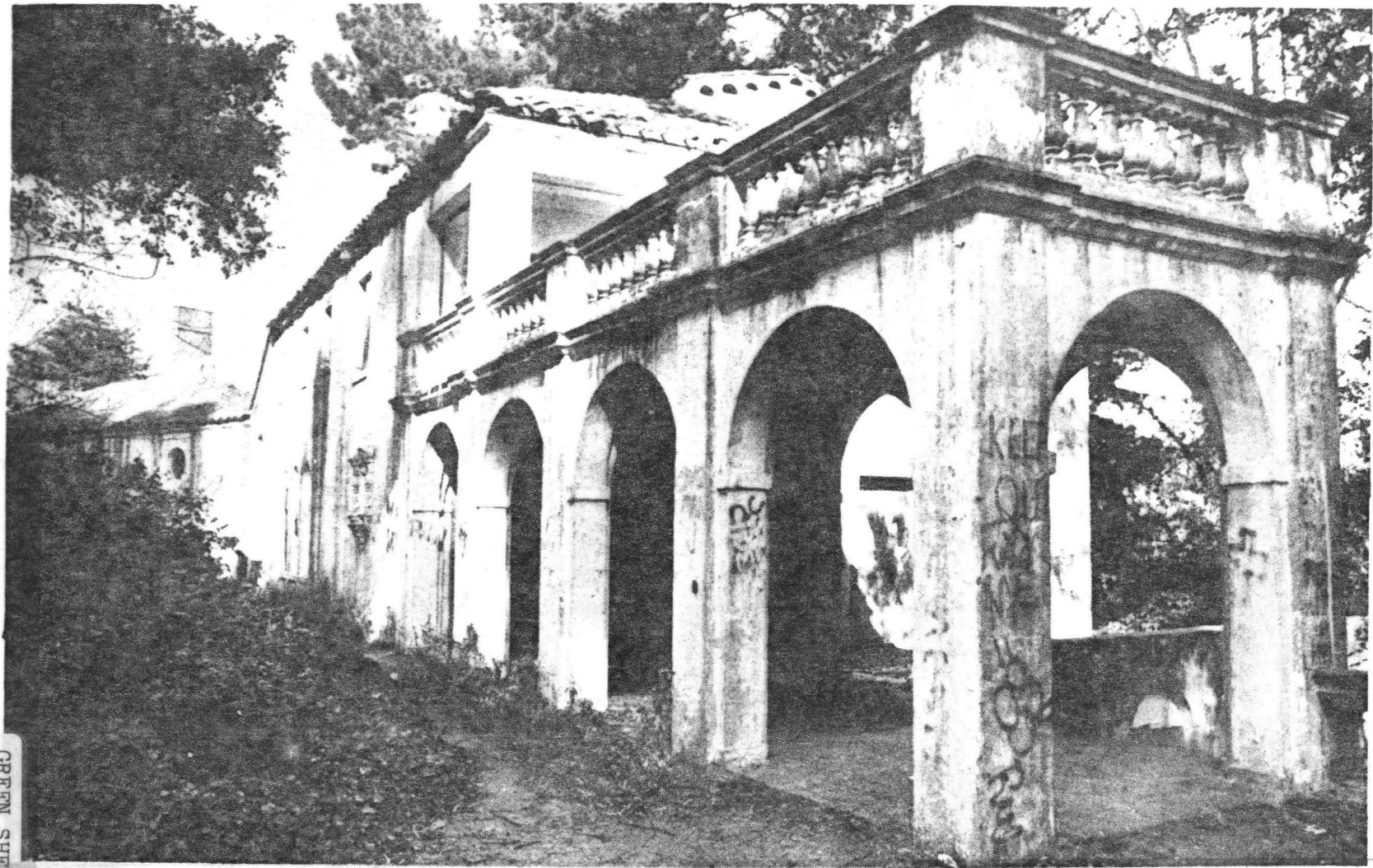


CAPITOLA
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Rispin Mansion suggested for library site



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Plans to purchase the old Rispin Mansion and restore it for use as a Capitola city library will be presented to the City Council Thursday night by Mayor Michael Routh.

In the meantime, an inter-agency committee called the Midcounty Branch Task Force — made up of representatives from Capitola, the county Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz City-County Library System — is continuing to explore the possibility of constructing a massive Midcounty library that would serve Capitola, Soquel and Live Oak.

Routh said last week that he's been meeting with a small group of residents interested in acquiring the mansion for public use.

At the present time, developer Howard Dysle is planning a single-family subdivision for the property between Wharf Road and Soquel Creek.

Routh says he's already informally lobbied the other council members and found them unanimously supportive of the idea that the city buy the property.

Routh contends that the mansion, built in the early 1920s, should be acquired because:

1. The Rispin Mansion is a

Kurt Ellison

The City Council will look at a proposal to purchase the Rispin Mansion for use as a library

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principal historic site in Capitola's early development and should be preserved for future generations.

2. Due to the historic value of the mansion and the sensitive nature of the site, it should be in the public trust.

3. The use of the restored mansion should be public and

serve a large segment of the Capitola community.

4. Capitola is in desperate need of a library in the community.

5. A city-owned and -operated

library can best serve the needs of the citizens of Capitola.

"The mansion would be restored and renovated to serve as a city library," Routh said in a letter that will be presented Thursday night to the City Council; the letter was obtained last week by this newspaper.

The city, as part of a Redevelopment Agency agreement with the county, is committed to providing a 7,000-square-foot library building that would be operated by the City-County Library System.

City-County Library Director Anne Turner wants the city to build a 17,554-square-foot facility that would serve most of Capitola and Soquel and all of Live Oak. That's about the size of the street floor of the main Santa Cruz branch. She estimated that construction and a start-up book collection would cost just under \$4 million. That doesn't include the price of the land.

Routh believes that the Rispin Mansion, with approximately 6,000 square feet of floor space on three floors, could fulfill that commitment, especially if there were minor additions made to the building.

"The city could use Redevelopment Agency money committed to the 7,000-square-foot facility," he said.

The asking price for the property, Routh estimated, would be between \$1.2 and \$1.5 million, but might be lower if the sellers were willing to take advantage of tax credits and write-offs available to them if they were to sell to the city and donate a portion of the purchase price.

The Friends of the Rispin Estate, "FORE," a group formed a couple of years ago to oppose Dysle's then-plans to build a senior citizens complex around the mansion, has a

\$400,000 commitment from the state Coastal Conservancy to restore the mansion if it can be first acquired.

But without use of the mansion as a library, "it would be hard to otherwise justify a \$2½ million expenditure (to purchase and restore the building).

"The floor plan lends itself to quiet reading rooms, listening centers, meeting areas, etc. in a very relaxed, informal atmosphere," Routh's letter says.

"It is envisioned to be a building that invites you to be comfortable. Fireplaces would remain and be functional. Outside, the formal gardens and fountain would be restored. A natural garden would be created on the remaining property, with meandering trails, benches and signing to clearly mark the many and various trees and shrubs that would be planted."

Parking could be accommodated on the mansion site. Pedestrian access problems could be solved, Routh suggests, by constructing a bridge across Soquel Creek to connect the mansion property with city-owned Peery Park next to Nob Hill.

"I believe that the city has an opportunity it should not let pass," Routh added. "The property has always been high on the (city) acquisition priority list. The community needs and wants a library. This is the perfect solution to fill two long-time community desires."