

the supervisors no longer had the ability to approve or deny projects. Under his vision, that power would be reserved for the Planning Department, which would be guided by zoning laws and other regulations set by the board. Supervisors representing neighborhood concerns wouldn't be able to block private developers.

"People own property, not the government," says Pisenti. "We have a housing problem in our county, and this is mainly because of limited building permits and excessive charges for those permits."

Where Pisenti would step out of the way of private developers following county law, candidate John Leopold would step in, but in a different manner than Beutz has done. Leopold, who works as development director for the Social Sciences Division at UCSC, believes the supervisor does have a role to play when it comes to regulating development in Live Oak, but that there needs to be a more positive, less adversarial tone to neighbor-developer negotiations. Instead of fighting off housing developers as intruders, Leopold promises to work on compromises acceptable to both sides.

"Building housing that is out of scale with the neighborhood is a legitimate concern, but I think we can prevent housing from being built that is inappropriate while still having a positive vision of what can be accomplished and built," he says. "Right now, Craig French of Red Tree Properties can't even get his phone calls returned. Do you want to run the county in a way that treats people as adversaries or that brings people into the process?"

Leopold envisions bringing together neighbors in Live Oak to create a community plan that could be presented to developers interested in working in the area. This way, guidelines would be set down before developers draw up plans that neighbors will never agree to.

"There's a mentality now that we have to stop everything, that we're a dumping ground, that these developers are trying to hurt us," he says. "Well, what about developing some positive goals? Let's figure out what those are and support the people paying our taxes."

Carolyn Busenhart, owner of Charisma Hair Salon, wants a future for Live Oak that is "crime free." Most days, there are only two sheriffs' deputies assigned to patrol the Live Oak area. After two shootings in the past six months, it has become clear to all the candidates that more deputies are needed. However, Busenhart sets herself apart from the other candidates by promising to focus on harsher penalties as a solution instead of preventive measures such as more

after-school activities.

"Right now, the strategy is to involve kids in programs, but that hasn't been working," argues Busenhart. Instead, she'd like to see harsher penalties for repeat offenders of gang-related activities. "We need to change our tactics and do something else. We need to get tougher on the gangs. Maybe that would start scaring some sense into them so they will leave the gangs."

Busenhart, who bills herself as the taxpayer's candidate, also envisions a more stringent use of county resources in Live Oak, especially in the transportation realm. While some hold up the purchase of the rail corridor that runs through Live Oak as a way to improve traffic congestion, Busenhart labels it a "useless waste of county funds."

Candidate Betty Danner, a former county employee and executive director of the Santa Cruz Criminal Justice Council, would follow in Beutz's footsteps more than any other candidate, which is probably why Beutz is endorsing her for the position. While Danner's first focus would be on reducing crime, she would also continue the fight against high-density housing being placed in Live Oak.

Her strategies for reducing crime are innovative. She would institute a juvenile drug court that would offer treatment instead of punishment for youth caught up in drugs, but would also hold up high standards to ensure they stay clean. She would expand the teen court program, which prosecutes high school students involved in low-level offenses without putting a mark on their record. Finally, she would reach out to gang members, especially the gang leaders, and attempt to get them involved in more positive group activities, such as a sports league.

"Generally, gang members don't join school-sponsored sports teams, but sports are a great way to engage our youth in positive activities," she says. "If we could set up a youth league, where the kids have a say in how, when and where the activity happens, they want to play. It's amazing how different that is from us telling them how, when and where to play."

Danner would also work to strengthen the Live Oak identity, something that has taken a more coherent form over recent years as neighborhood organizations grow. The first step in this direction could be something as simple as a few signs at the area's borders saying "Welcome to Live Oak."

"It's simple, but you start to build a sense of identity with something like that," says Danner. "People always say, 'Where does Live Oak begin? Where does it end?' Identity is the beginning, and then you need to build upon that." 