

Housing project shelved

Funds shortfall puts halt to S.V. development

By **HEATHER BOERNER**
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SCOTTS VALLEY — The Tower Lodge project, which riled the sentiments of neighbors and housing advocates alike just three months ago, is on hold.

“At this point, I’m skeptical about how feasible it will be to build here,” said Anna Maria White of Mercy Charities California. “We’ll begin looking elsewhere in the county.”

The project is on hold because the state Department of Housing and Community Development did not give Mercy the \$3 million grant the nonprofit was hoping for. White said the project lost because it is in a somewhat rural area and isn’t as close as some other projects to bus lines and shopping.

The Tower Lodge project was proposed to be a 30-unit single-room-occupancy building for the formerly homeless. The 3-acre property south of Scotts Valley has been rented out on a room-by-room basis for several years by owner Darrel Darling.

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Lodge

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Neighbors of the site on El Rancho Road just south of Scotts Valley turned out en masse to fight the proposal or at least secure guarantees about the impact on the septic system and traffic.

Susan Schuelke, a neighbor of the site, said she’s simply waiting to hear the truth. Supervisor Jan Beautz sent a letter to nearby residents informing them of the proposal. After January’s Board of Supervisors meeting in which neighbors asked for more details, Schuelke said she approached Mercy representatives to form a neighborhood committee. But she said she hasn’t heard a word from them since.

Julie Conway, a homeless and housing advocate, called the stalling of the Tower Lodge project a shame. After homeless people have been in transitional housing projects such as the Page Smith House in Santa Cruz, they often face the dilemma of finding housing they can afford in the least affordable market in the country.

“There isn’t anything else like this out there,” she said. “SROs (single-room occupancy) are an important type of housing because it’s generally the most affordable housing in the area.”

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