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GREENBELT
Quest for green

Santa Cruz seeks ways to pay for the open spaces citizens want

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News Staff Writer

In environmentally minded Santa Cruz, a nuclear-free zone ringed with bicycle lanes and brimming with outdoorspeople, it goes without saying that a good number of citizens support parks and nature preserves.

But as city leaders working to preserve 376 acres of privately owned greenbelt are finding out, slogans come a lot easier than specifics.

Which lands should Santa Cruz buy? What activities should it allow on them? Hiking? Horses? Soccer fields? And most touchy,

who pays the bill?

"We know people love the greenbelt," said City Councilman Mike Rotkin. "What we don't know is how much they're willing to pay for it."

Answers are expected soon. In June, the city will conduct a poll of 400 residents and mail newsletters to every household — a total of 30,000 — containing maps of the lands and options for public purchase.

Most liberal leaders in Santa Cruz are desperately hoping that voters who go to the polls June 7 will approve Proposition 180, the California Parks and Wildlife Ini-

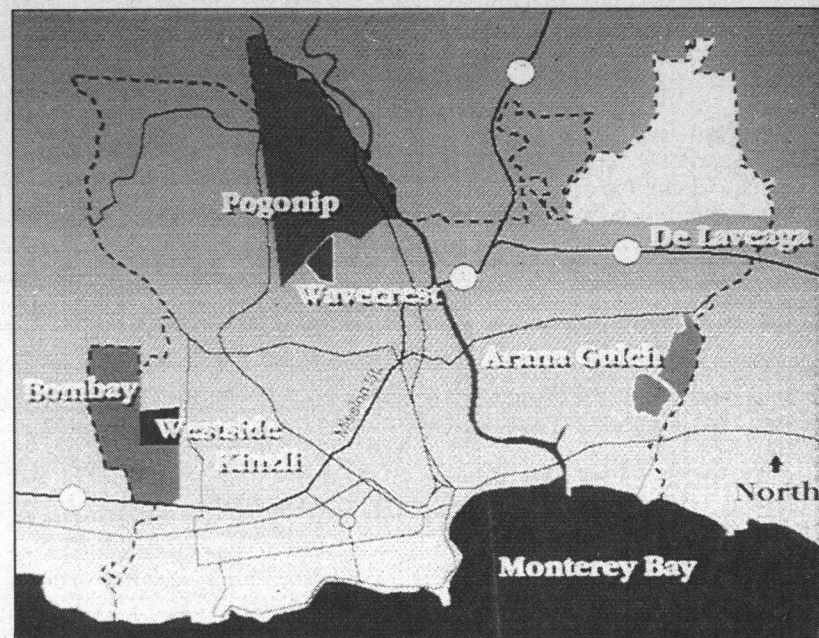
tiative, a state bond measure that includes \$4 million to pay for Santa Cruz greenbelt lands.

If Proposition 180 fails, a host of other ideas — from a local sales tax hike to property tax increases — could be suggested. Even if Proposition 180 passes, however, its \$4 million windfall will not provide enough money to buy all the land.

"Nobody should imagine we're getting anything for free," said Rotkin.

Four parcels of land in question feature scenic meadows, forests and spectacular ocean views.

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SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY NEWS

Four parcels of land feature meadows, scenic forests and ocean views. Their value is estimated at between \$7 million and \$9 million.