

# What will replace Bethany College?

## Investors inspect Scotts Valley site

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Bethany College could become an extension campus for a Chinese university, a high-tech business park or a housing development.

All three scenarios are being studied as potential investors inspect the 98-acre campus which was put on the market two months ago with a \$29 million price tag.

"A number of colleges are looking at the property, including two Taiwanese institutions," said Bethany spokesman Brian Steckman Wednesday. "Housing is a possibility; they could rip down all of the buildings here and put in houses. And there has been interest in building a business or industrial park."

Real estate agents handling the sale will not reveal the names of potential buyers.

"That would not be a prudent thing to do," said Stephen Pace, associate vice president at Schneider Commercial Real Estate in Santa Clara. "But Asian interests are pursuing investigations ... and there has been a fair amount of activity from academic and commercial users."

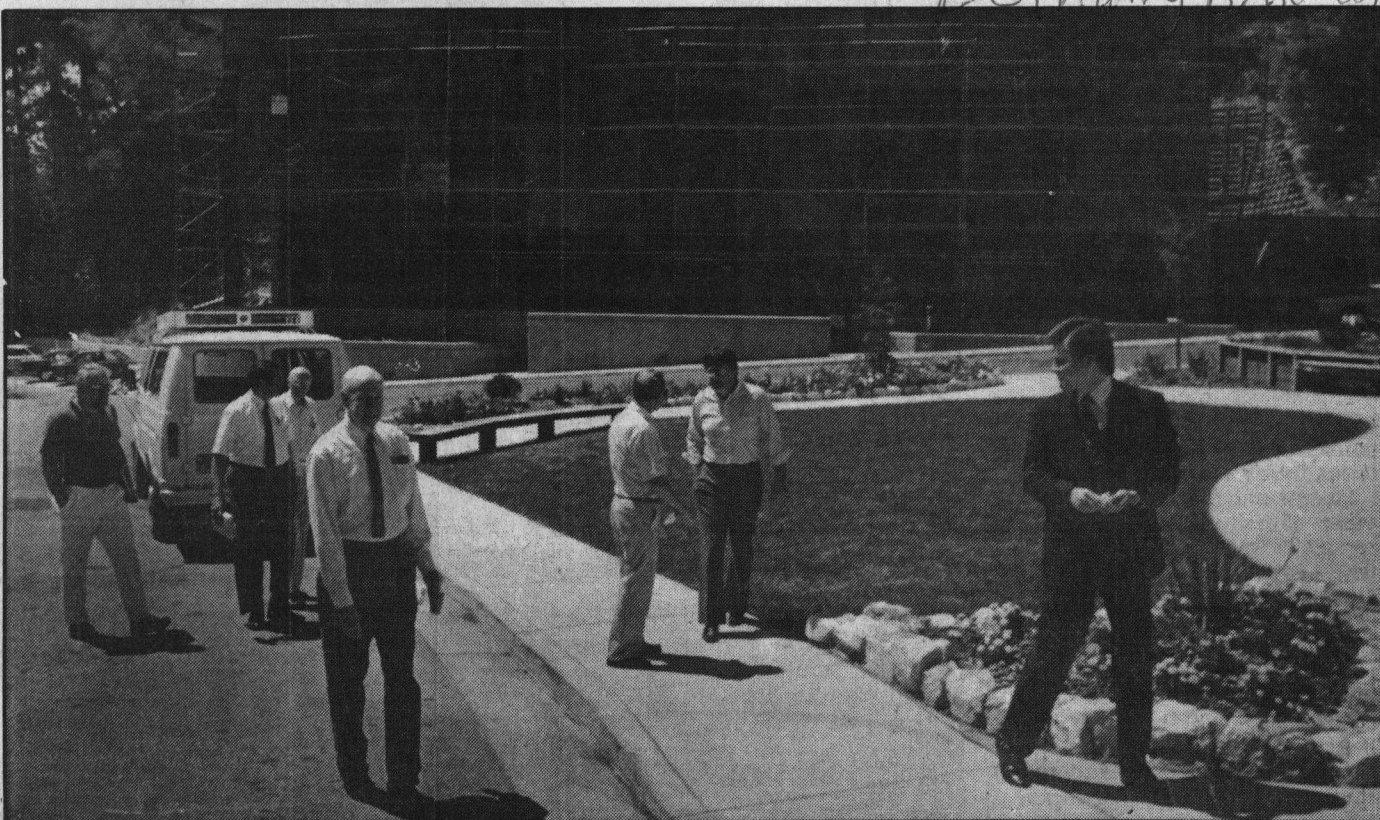
One major selling point of the property between Highway 17 and Glenwood Drive in north Scotts Valley is its proximity to Silicon Valley, Pace said.

"You get off the freeway and in less than a mile you're in a real pristine, wilderness type setting," he said. "It's so convenient."

After 40 years in Scotts Valley, Bethany College officials decided in April to sell the campus and move to the Sacramento area by 1993. Housing costs here and proximity to the population base of the Assembly of God church, which operates the school, prompted the move, college officials have said.

The exact timing of the move will depend on acquisition of a new campus, Steckman said. College officials are now pondering the merits of two different Sacramento-area sites, he said.

"This has been in the works for probably 10 years," Steckman said. "Everyone could see it was necessary to move on. We looked at moving three years ago, before prices soared in this area, but we couldn't afford it at the time."



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Scotts Valley Rotarians tour the isolated Bethany Bible College campus Wednesday.

But after prices rocketed upward, college officials figured that money from the sale of the campus will not only buy a new campus in the Sacramento area, but will generate enough extra money to fund a large endowment. The endowment would probably be used for operating expenses, Steckman said.

Officials also hope that relocating near a large population center will boost the school's enrollment from an average of 5,000 students to an average of 1,000. Lower housing costs in the Sacramento area will also ease the financial burden on students.

Members of the San Lorenzo Valley Rotary Club toured the campus with Steckman Wednesday, and several expressed hope that the campus would not be demolished for another housing development in north Scotts Valley. That end of the city is rapidly filling with new homes, and plans are now in the works for hundreds more.

"Personally, I would hate to see that," said club president Ken Clouse.

"I would like to see it remain a campus, and at least partly open for public use."

Overall, Bethany owns 119 acres in north Scotts Valley, but only 98 of those acres are being offered for sale, Pace said. Of the 98 acres, 30 are outside city limits.

Much of the property is steep, wooded and undeveloped, but in 1986 Scotts Valley approved a new master plan for the campus that will allow significant new development. The master plan includes a large new dining hall, a conference center, a theater arts building, a second outdoor amphitheater, a swimming pool and a hilltop bell tower. A new three-story administration building is under construction, and should be complete by the end of the year, Steckman said.

Any new owner would be able to complete the building program envisioned in the 1986 master plan, he said, which could be an incentive for an academic buyer.

The campus now has 66,733 square

feet of common buildings, 34,220 square feet of academic buildings and 46,426 square feet of housing. The campus has a large chapel, a library building, a large child-care center, a cafeteria, housing for 400 students and a small gymnasium, in addition to other buildings.

The campus is zoned Public/Quasi Public under Scotts Valley's General Plan, a designation that covers such uses as schools, hospitals, fire stations and city buildings, according to Senior City Planner Kathryn Caldwell. The property's main drawback is access, she said, noting that the only road leading to the remote site is two-lane Bethany Drive.

Campus officials have been "very creative" in dealing with the traffic challenge, but new owners may have to face the problem anew, she said. The city is aware of the campus' pending sale, but will take no action until a proposal for future use is submitted, she said.