

mixed-use development, which typically combines businesses on the ground floor with housing on higher floors. “Do you honestly think people’s lives are going to improve just because there’s mixed use?” she asks. She thought a proposal for three-story mixed use at East Village several years ago was too massive, and the neighbors evidently agreed.

Nor is she enamored of COPA or the *Community Snapshot* report published in February by the nonprofit Live Oak Family Resource Center. Beautz questions the worth of the report’s findings given that it excludes the sizable section of her district that lies north of Soquel Drive and includes the solidly middle-class neighborhood of Santa Cruz Gardens. (Family Resource Center co-director Elizabeth Schilling says that in the absence of an official definition of Live Oak, the report defined it as the area served by the Live Oak School District—basically south of Highway 1 between Santa Cruz and Capitola.)

One thing almost everyone agrees on is the need for more commercial development.

“I think it’s important for the community to get this shopping center going,” says Karla Oliveira, owner of the Delicious Café in East Cliff Village Center. “I’m here all day and I hear people talking. Everyone complains that there’s no grocery store. People come here to buy produce and milk.” She points to a small cooler near the counter. “I also sell Kelly’s bread.”

Johnson, the light fixture designer, says he hopes the 17th and Brommer parcel near his studio will help ease congestion. “A restaurant/upstairs housing thing could be in order,” he says. “That could be a key little spot for Live Oak. I’m all about people living and working close to each other.”

Beautz, too, wants neighborhood commercial, though she says there’s too much competition for a full-service grocery store. As for housing, she’s adamant. “I do think Live Oak has paid its dues.”

Unpleasant Subjects

Live Oak may have paid its dues, but the old way of doing business isn’t working. On a warm day in late April, Elizabeth Schilling turns into the Pine Knolls mobile home park on Capitola Road, a stone’s throw from the border with Capitola. A sheriff’s cruiser is parked at the entrance. The place is quiet. The first several rows of coaches seem tidy enough, if a little run down. Behind the main section of the park, though, along the edge of a lower lot, is a scene you’d never find in the neighborhoods where many of Pine Knolls’ residents undoubtedly work as gardeners, maids and busboys. A ramshackle mobile home would look palatial here; these are travel trailers and motor homes housing Santa Cruz’s invisible workforce. “In the

summers they’re sleeping on the roofs,” Schilling says.

“I wouldn’t disagree that it’s in bad shape,” says Beautz, who sits on the county’s mobile homes commission, “but I guess I feel the county has tried really hard with mobile home issues.” She points out that Pleasant Acres, an older park on 17th near Capitola Road, is about to get \$2 million in infrastructure improvements through a county program, and that the county has helped some residents buy their parks.

For Jorge Zavala, situations like these point to a disparity that’s hard to ignore. An assistant director for human resources at the umbrella nonprofit group Community Bridges, Zavala was born and raised in Live Oak. He doesn’t remember noticing as a kid that the stretch of his street between 17th and Chanticleer—where the houses are smaller and funkier and most of the families Latino—had no streetlights. “It’s pitch black!” he says. “Then I counted on the other side of Chanticleer. There are eight. There it is, right there, that disparity. And I never even noticed it.”

As a member of COPA’s Community Safety Strategy Team, Zavala works to counteract the effects of poverty and crowding on kids. He wants to get some appealing after-school programs going so boys will have something to do besides hang around with Santa Cruz’s half-dozen gangs or try disturbing new drug combinations (a 13-year-old he knows was recently invited to try pot with crushed Vicodin mixed in). Homework clubs won’t cut it for this group; Zavala wants something sports-related without the nerdy stigma of an adult-supervised program.

Zavala’s work is part of a trend that Santa Cruz County doesn’t seem to want to acknowledge, says Hearon of the Live Oak Family Resource Center.

“I believe there’s a fear that our community, especially in Live Oak, has changed over the last 10 or 20 years,” she says. “That California has changed—it’s no longer a white majority state. With demographic changes, people can feel threatened. And there is both overt and underlying racism at play here.”

Another issue even broader than racism undergirds any discussion of the future: the simple fact of population growth. In the next four years California’s population is expected to reach 40 million; by 2032 it will have topped 50 million. How Santa Cruz County deals with its share of this growth will determine whether it remains an inclusive, progressive community or falls into the typical coastal pattern of decrepitude proliferating to serve opulence.

“I think Live Oak is in a sense a microcosm of what’s happening throughout the state,” Hearon says. “And ignoring the issues will not make them go away.”