

Residents wary of improvement plan

By JONDI GUMZ

Sentinel staff writer

CORRALITOS — A plan for the future of Corralitos has been in the works for more than a decade. But folks in the community say they had no idea somebody was writing a plan for them.

About 200 people showed up at the Corralitos Grange Hall Wednesday night, some of them suggesting the project come to a screeching halt.

"Do you have a table for people who don't want a plan?" asked Marian Varni, whose husband is a fourth-generation apple farmer.

"It comes down to private property rights," farmer John Skromme said, as the crowd whooped in agreement.

Others wondered if it was too late to change the plan.

"There's no deadline," county planner Mark Deming said.

Some Corralitos neighbors fear loss of community character

"We're nowhere near being done," added Daniel Mountjoy, chairman of the Corralitos Valley Community Council, which drafted the plan with the county Planning Department.

Corralitos is one of three unincorporated areas without an adopted plan. A proposal for Seacliff will go to the supervisors on Tuesday and a plan for Davenport is being written.

The Corralitos plan offers recommendations for preserving the community, such as designating certain sites — including apple orchards — as historic and certain highways as scenic, where development would be restricted. It proposes more sidewalks and bicycle lanes to improve safety, changes residents feared would turn the rural community into another Sili-

con Valley.

Many meetings have been held in Corralitos over the past decade, but only a handful of people have participated. When the meeting organizers asked who had attended earlier meetings, only about eight hands went up.

Deming said the planning process would continue.

"If you don't want it, write the supervisors and tell them," he said.

Skromme, a native of Cupertino, said the way to keep Corralitos rural is to encourage farming. He said planners told him it would cost \$2,000 — money he doesn't have — to sign up for a plan to preserve his farm.

Community members who had worked on the plan defended the process.

Cricket Honeywell said she got

involved at the urging of Joe Cutler, the late owner of the Corralitos Market, after a child was killed in a car accident on Hames Road.

Alan Shelley said he was elected to the board of the Corralitos Valley Community Council after he began attending meetings to see if he could change the county building codes.

"It took me six years to get a building permit," he said.

At times, the crowd threatened to become unruly.

Resident Bill Kieley said county officials have neglected roads in the area.

"The problem with the county is you never know anything," he said.

"Look at the contradictions in the plan," Madeline Hntowich-Dean said. "It talks about overdraft

yet it calls for more cement, parking and sidewalks, down by the market."

Mountjoy acknowledged that "the plan is full of contradictions," and urged residents to make suggestions to improve it.

"We've got to act because somebody else is going to have a plan," agreed Sonya Deetz, who said she was surprised by "hostile environment" in the Grange Hall.

"We'd rather be left alone," said George Betz, a farm real estate broker who complained that county planners have red-tagged a nursery in Soquel "We just need to be neighborly."

Some residents feared that Watsonville, which owns a sizeable piece of property at the crossroads by the market, will annex the area, but Deming said that couldn't happen unless the city bought more land.