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City official questions UCSC report on impact of high-technology center

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SANTA CRUZ — A university-paid report on the social and economic impacts of a proposed high-technology research and development center at UC Santa Cruz is "unconvincing" and based on "questionable" assumptions, according to city Planning Director Peter Katzlberger.

The 104-page report is a technical appendix to the yet-to-be-completed environmental impact report on the proposed research center on 100-acres of university-owned land.

Katzlberger said in a letter to university project officials, "I have reservations about the general approach, assumptions and conclusions" of the "impacts" section of the socio-

economic report.

"I find much of (the heart of) this section unconvincing, and presented in a very static context," stated Katzlberger in the letter to the project's Environment Assessment Group.

Disputing the university report, Katzlberger said there is no evidence to show new jobs created by a research center would reduce the number of commuters driving over Highway 17 from Santa Cruz to Santa Clara County. Projections show the research center could generate as many as 2,000 new jobs over a 10-year period.

A report prepared by the city planning department shows new jobs in Santa Cruz do not necessarily lure

Santa Cruz workers to leave their jobs in Santa Clara County for work closer to home.

That report showed the number of commuters continuing to increase, despite about 870 new job openings since 1979 in electronic firms such as Synertek and Raytek.

The university socio-economic report is "not persuasive" in addressing impacts of the proposed research center on the housing market or population densities, stated Katzlberger.

Katzlberger takes issue with an assumption in the report that the jobless will not move to Santa Cruz County to take unskilled jobs paying \$19,000 per year.

"It is easy for me to imagine that an unemployed person outside the

local economy may be attracted to such a job, especially if he or she is single, willing to share living accommodations, and if the person knows that, at \$19,000, this income is considerably over the average in the county," said Katzlberger.

Katzlberger does admit the report "is forthright in acknowledging that little empirical data exists on factors affecting job mobility and likelihood of in-migration."

The City Council had directed Katzlberger to make comments on the report and to forward them to the university.

The council will consider Katzlberger's report when it meets Tuesday during a 4-6 p.m. session in the Council Chamber at City Hall.