

Spring Fair Site

Although we have our doubts whether anyone is interested in a compromise solution regarding a site for the annual Spring Fair, we believe one of the latest proposals makes good sense.

The proposal calls for holding the Spring Fair on the benchlands in San Lorenzo Park, within easy walking distance of the Pacific Garden Mall and with the advantages of the weekend parking facilities at the County Government Center.

There is a split among some of the directors of the Downtown Businessmen's Association regarding the Spring Fair although a sizeable portion of the membership voted against holding the fair on the mall.

The issue is scheduled to come before the City Council Tuesday evening in what may well become a major dispute.

While the fair has become a popular weekend event in Santa Cruz, it has outgrown the facilities along the mall as well as creating serious problems for the merchants in the Central Business District.

Last year the fair drew large crowds and virtually brought parking to a halt in the downtown sector. The parking problem alone is a major issue.

Secondly, there are other factors involved

including the sale of food as well as the question of whether the street vendors have sales tax licenses such as are required by the mall merchants.

But the big problem is that the fair has become too big for the limited area along the mall. There simply isn't enough space for the sidewalk sales and easy access to stores.

If some sort of emergency occurred in the downtown area during the Spring Fair it is highly doubtful if emergency vehicles could respond to the problem due to the congestion of people and exhibits.

It is our belief that the San Lorenzo Park benchlands offer an excellent setting for the fair while retaining the ability for visitors to go to the fair or to wander across the bridge and visit the mall.

There is excellent parking on a weekend at the government center, at the Water Street jury lot and in the general area along the park.

It is close enough to the downtown to retain the ability to attract visitors who want to view the exhibits as well as to shop.

The downtown merchants and landlords have a sizeable investment in the mall. They do not exactly like to find themselves confronted with competitive "free" sales stands, and their objection is legitimate.

It is not as some of the critics have maintained, an issue of who owns the mall. The mall belongs to all the people, not just those who oppose the Spring Fair on the mall or those who want the fair on the mall.

There is a question of safety, a question of the parking capabilities of the mall, and a question of the strong differences of opinion regarding the effect of the fair on business conditions.

Hopefully, the City Council will be able to work out a plan which will allow the continuance of the fair, but at a site which does not adversely affect normal business activity.

San Lorenzo Park, we believe offers an opportunity to put the mall exhibits and sales areas within a specific site without creating the congestion which has taken place during the fair at the mall.

Perhaps, there may be better facilities than San Lorenzo benchlands along the park. However, the proposal appears the best we have heard to date.

The Old Sash Mill offers a truly interesting area, but we have our doubts about parking and traffic access there.

We believe it would be a good idea to try out the San Lorenzo Park benchlands as a site for the popular Spring Fair.