

Critics take aim at Scotts Valley proposal

By DENISE FRANKLIN
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — The public hearing has yet to be held, but residents have already given the city an earful, pointing out what they see as flaws in a plan to develop the 93-acre Skypark property with homes, businesses, parkland and a middle school.

Among the key points in the debate: locating a middle school at Skypark, sending additional traffic into nearby neighborhoods, and failure to include sidewalks on Mount Hermon Road as part of the project.

While it was not officially a pub-

lic hearing, last Wednesday's study session by the City Council and Planning Commission elicited heated comments. The public hearing on the Skypark specific plan and final environmental impact report will be at 6 p.m. Sept. 17 at City Hall.

"I don't want to see the anger and the venom that has come out (at this meeting)," Councilwoman Gina Koshland said.

Koshland was responding to Scotts Valley resident Wendy Brannan's complaint that the middle school may have to be moved because of its proximity to Wat-

The public hearing on the Skypark specific plan and final environmental impact report will be at 6 p.m. Sept. 17.

kins-Johnson, an industry that uses hazardous chemicals (see related story).

Skypark has been designated a "special treatment area" by the city, meaning a comprehensive plan must be adopted before anything can be developed.

The main portion of the site is bordered by Mount Hermon Road

and Kings Village Drive. It also includes an old quarry on Lockhart Gulch Road below the main site.

The city is nearing the end of a three-year process in coming up with a plan for the site, part of which once was the Skypark Airport. It has worked with three property owners — H and L Partners, Bill and Shirley Graham, and

the city of Santa Cruz — to reach proposed development agreements.

As proposed, a maximum of 148 housing units could be built on 34 acres; 32.5 acres would contain a park, open space and a middle school; and 26 acres would be developed for commercial use.

Under the proposed agreements with the property owners, the city will have five years to attract developers to the majority of the commercial land and only six months to find developers for a site to the north of K mart.

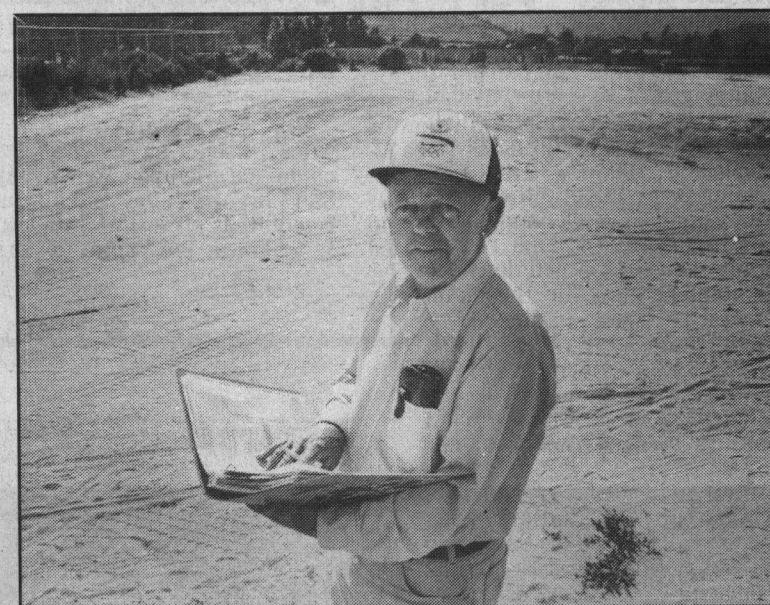
If the city hasn't been able to bring about commercial development during that time, the marketing of the land to developers re-

verts to the property owners.

The city is hoping for a large "anchor" store, as well as a transit center like the one in front of Capitola Mall.

According to Mike D'Amico, the city's negotiator for the project, the commercial development could bring in \$1.4 million annually in sales tax the city, plus \$5 million in one-time-only fees charged to developers.

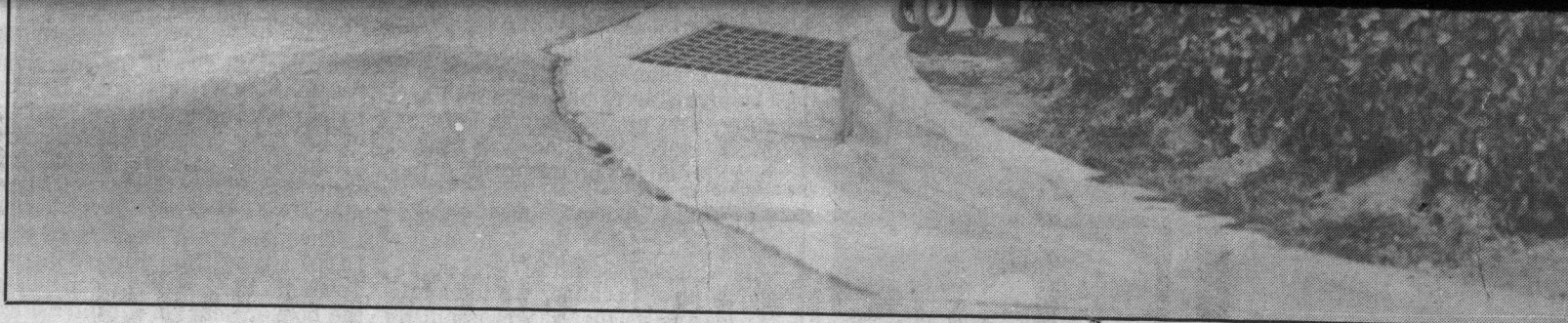
In exchange for this financial boost, the city will have to pay \$4 million for parkland. The money will come from bonds sold to investors and paid back from any increases in property taxes within the city's redevelopment agency.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Ed Winkler proposes the Skypark road go between the post office and roller skating rink.

Wanted: a plan for 6419 cars a day



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Wendy Brannan says adding traffic to Mount Hermon Road without building sidewalks will create a hazard.

Sidewalks will be needed, resident says

By DENISE FRANKLIN
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SCOTTS VALLEY — Whispering Pines Drive resident Wendy Brannan is appalled that the plan to develop Skypark does not include sidewalks on Mount Hermon Road.

The traffic generated by this major development of homes, businesses and parkland on 93 acres necessitates pedestrian safety improvements between Lockhart Gulch Road and Lockwood Lane, Brannan said at a Skypark study session Wednesday night.

Brannan also complained there are no plans to put sidewalks on both sides of Lockwood Lane at Mount Hermon Road. Sidewalks exist only on one side now, she said.

And the developers of Skypark, she added, should be required to pay for all these improvements.

As proposed, the city, through its redevelopment agency, would finance all the road improvements needed for the Skypark development.

Brannan noted that the city hopes to develop 148 units of affordable housing on an old quarry on Lockhart Gulch as part of the Skypark project, yet no sidewalks are planned along Mount Hermon Road from this development to the city's commercial center.

She also said the proposed four-way intersection at Lockwood Lane, Mount Hermon Road and the entrance to Skypark invites accidents. Motorists on Mount Hermon Road will not be able to see vehicles coming down the hill from Lockwood Lane to the intersection, she noted.

Lockwood Lane motorists will speed up to avoid a red light and fly through the intersection, colliding with cars on Mount Hermon

Road, she said. She suggested angling the intersection slightly to prevent this from happening.

Planning Commission Chairman Michael Shulman supported angling the intersection, adding, "We need to take a cohesive look at Mount Hermon Road."

He called for a design much like the city has done for Scotts Valley Drive, showing pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, lengths between shopping center entrances to make sure pedestrians can walk from center to center, and the effect of building a transit center as part of Skypark.

The city hopes to build a transit center like the one at Capitola Mall at the intersection of Kings Village Drive and Mount Hermon Road. The intersection would be closed and traffic from Kings Village Drive would be rerouted to the intersection at the entrance to Kings Village Shopping Center.

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SCOTTS VALLEY — More stop signs in the Bluebonnet Lane/Bean Creek Road neighborhood could alleviate traffic problems caused by the Skypark development, Planning Commission Chairman Michael Shulman said.

Shulman offered three suggestions during a study session Wednesday on the specific plan and final draft environmental impact report for Skypark, a 93-acre commercial, residential and park development planned for the city's urban core.

Besides the stop signs, which he said would deter motorists from using the neighborhood as a short-cut to Scotts Valley Drive, he proposed keeping commercial trucks off Bluebonnet and Bean Creek Road and enforcing the 25 mph limit.

A road through Skypark from Mount Hermon Road to Bluebonnet Lane would increase traffic in the neighborhood from the 3,425 to 6,419 vehicles a day, according to a study.

Shulman suggested four-way stops at the Bluebonnet Lane/Viki Court/Bean Creek Road intersection and at the Christel Oaks Lane/Bean Creek Road/Hidden Oaks intersection. These stop signs, coupled with a three-way stop proposed at the bottom of

Bluebonnet Lane not only would deter traffic, but also slow it down, Shulman said.

"It may not be the end all," Shulman said. "We may have the opportunity to turn these stop signs into stop lights."

Mayor Joe Miller also suggested a three-way stop at Oak Lane and Bean Creek Road.

Miller said stop signs are a much better way to control traffic than "artificial barriers and streets that curve in artificial ways." He was referring to a suggestion in the report to place a concrete berm to prevent traffic from traveling up Bluebonnet Lane from Skypark and to a proposal to realign the main road through the development.

Ed Allender and Ed Winkler suggested the road through Skypark be realigned to come out onto Kings Village Drive between the post office and The Rink. That way, they said, the road will not be a straight shot from Mount Hermon Road for those seeking a short cut.

Virginia Allender, noting the proposed road passes in front of the Scotts Valley Senior Center, said, "That is quite frightening to us. There are 400-plus people 55 and older who use that center. They already have trouble getting out of the parking lot."



Terry Ow
still hopeful on school site

District, city officials at odds over middle school site

By DENISE FRANKLIN
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — The question of whether a new middle school will be built at Skypark, the former airport here, is up in the air.

At a study session Wednesday on the 93-acre Skypark project, school district officials blasted the city for indicating it may not allow a middle school there.

"That's news to us," said Richard Balanos, attorney for the school district. He insisted the district has an ironclad agreement with the city that it will be given 5.5 acres for a middle school at Skypark to replace the existing middle school on Scotts Valley Drive.

Even the specific plan, Balanos noted,

talks about a middle school being built in conjunction with an 18-acre city park at Skypark.

But the plan was written before officials knew that Watkins-Johnson, a manufacturer near Skypark that uses hazardous chemicals, would be subject to new state regulations if a school were located within a quarter-mile of their plant.

These regulations would make it difficult for the company to stay competitive and would cause it to leave Scotts Valley, according to Watkins-Johnson attorney Carol Webster Millie.

"There's no question that the intent in going into the agreement (with the school district) was to provide property," said City Attorney Bob Logan. The agreement, he

said, allows the city to pay the district \$2.5 million to locate the school somewhere else.

Balanos maintained that the only "escape clause" is if the city can't provide infrastructure improvements, such as roads and sewer, for a school. Then the city would have to pay the \$2.5 million, he said.

The city made the agreement when it formed a redevelopment agency that would take property-tax revenues from the school district.

Both Millie and Balanos asked that the City Council delay adopting the final environmental impact report on Skypark until it addresses the issue of the school site.

"A delay now will result in the ultimate satisfaction of the community," Millie said, noting that the school could be located else-

where on the Skypark site so it would be beyond a quarter-mile from Watkins-Johnson.

But the authors of the report, Certified-Earth Metrics, said this isn't the time to analyze the issue. Instead, they said, it should be brought up when school construction is proposed.

School Board President Terry Ow said the board is willing to work with Watkins-Johnson and the city to solve the problem.

"Unfortunately for me, I am looking at a site we thought we had at Skypark," Ow said. "Until we have another site, we are planning our future growth on the Skypark site. This is the first time I have heard that there may not be a school on the Skypark property ..."