

Greenbelt

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The \$3.4 Million Deal

Santa Cruz finally bought Arana Gulch. Now what?

AFTER 15 YEARS OF PERSISTENT greenbelt activism, the City of Santa Cruz has finally purchased 55-plus acres on the eastside known as Arana Gulch. Although the ultimate use of Arana Gulch remains undetermined, Greenbelt advocate Patricia Matejcek is pleased that the land will not become an auto plaza — which almost happened several years ago when local auto dealers were deciding where to relocate.

Matejcek organized a walk around the property last weekend in celebration of the fact that the fight for Arana Gulch is finally over. Led by environmentalist and city council candidate, Celia Scott, the walk was attended by about 50 people, “a lot of families with kids,” who explored Arana Gulch’s boundaries from Capitola Road to the upper harbor and 7th Avenue to Frederick Street. Patricia

Matejcek hopes that community enthusiasm for the land acquisition will grow since “there is a lot of work to be done on the property.” Apparently, the long years during which Arana Gulch’s fate was up in the air allowed the land to fall into an obvious state of neglect.

And that’s not the only challenge that acquiring the Arana Gulch property poses. The City of Santa Cruz has yet to find a way to pay \$3.4 million for the parcel they bought from Ernie and Diane Kinzli, which is due by June 1995. So far, city accountants have done some creative juggling to make the land deal work, but will probably have to sell off residential lots along Swanton Boulevard (near Natural Bridges) valued at approximately \$2 million. But that still leaves them \$1.4 million short.

To Patricia Matejcek the worst-

case scenario would be if the city has to sell off half the Arana Gulch property as residential homesites. “There is a definite public consensus to preserve the land as open space,” she continues. “We don’t want to see it turn into concrete. We don’t want to see it become a suburban development, and we don’t want it to become a Harvey West ‘East.’ ”

Controversy continues over what to do with Arana Gulch, and how to ultimately pay for it. Some have suggested Arana Gulch as an ideal site for a Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Interpretive Center that would have easy access from the freeway. Once again, it’s all a matter of figuring out how to pay for it.

If you have any ideas, now is the time to get involved. To contact Patricia Matejcek, call 423-8567.

— Virginia Lee