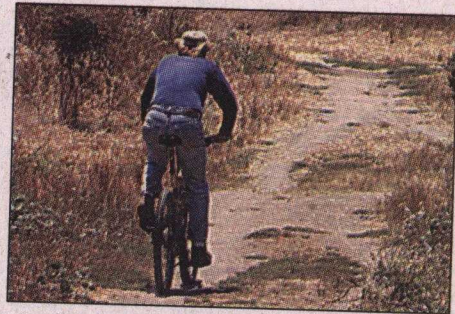


ARANA GULCH

# Greenbelt plan angers neighbors



A pedestrian/bike-trail bridge would be built at the edge of Richard Criswell's Harbor Drive home to span Hagemann Gulch and connect with the west end of Arana Gulch Canyon Trail. Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

## Biggest concern is proposal for a paved path

By SHANNA MCCORD  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — While city leaders craft a long-term strategy for managing Arana Gulch, some nearby residents are digging in to fight the heart of the plan — a paved path across the meadow.

"I just don't understand what the need is to put in this huge thing," said Kim Hill, who lives on Mentel Avenue near the north end

of Arana Gulch. "It will cause an uproar for the wildlife and scare them all away."

The gulch, one of the few open spaces on the Eastside, is a 63-acre greenbelt tucked between Agnes Street and the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor that's home to a meadow, oak trees, tarplant and a creek. The city purchased the former cattle ranch from the Kinzli family in 1994 for \$3.4 million.

The city's master plan for the area pro-

poses how to care for the endangered tarplant, building an interpretive trail system with signs, continuing to prohibit dogs from being off leash and not making room for new parking.

Causing the most squabble is an 8-foot wide paved pedestrian-bike path about a half-mile long that connects Brommer Street with Broadway Avenue — creating a link

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between the city's east and west sides.

The path would be accessible to wheelchairs, include a bridge over Hagemann Gulch and run across the north side of the harbor storage yard. Previous plans for a bridge over Arana Creek have been nixed.

### Paving the way

How much the paved path would cost won't be known until further design studies are done, said Chris Schneider of the city Public Works Department.

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission has already agreed to contribute \$1.6 million to building the path, with money from federal transportation bills, Schneider said.

"We need more details on the design of the bridge and the path and be further into the process before we can determine the cost," he said.

Path foes counter arguments from supporters who say the path would add new bike riders daily to the city by contending

it's too expensive, not needed and would ruin the area's pristine environment.

"It's not a path, it's a road," said Patricia Matejcek of the local chapter of the Sierra Club. "You're destroying this last green piece here for nothing, and you're spending a staggering amount of money."

People who bike regularly around Santa Cruz say a safer east-west connection makes perfect sense, and they hope a path brings more daily bicycle commuters.

"Soquel Avenue is like a combat zone if you're on a bike," said Micah Posner of People Power, a bicycle advocacy group in Santa Cruz. "We need to grow up as an environmental movement because driving a car is the single worst thing you can do to the environment as an individual."

### Nature in mind

An environmental impact report for the path was certified by the City Council in May 2003.

However, council members refuse to allow construction of the path until a master plan for Arana Gulch is complete and includes the path.

Scott Kennedy, a member of the council in 2003 who voted in

favor of the path's environmental impact report, said his vote was meant to encourage alternative transportation.

"It was one of the only things I voted on that I was confident would improve transportation in the city and actually take cars off the road," he said Wednesday.

Residents near Arana Gulch are also concerned with 6 acres of the gulch being cut from the master plan, fearing city officials will sell the land to developers for housing.

Ultimately, the Arana Gulch master plan must win approval from the City Council and the California Coastal Commission. Neither group is expected to be presented with the plan until 2006, said Susan Harris of the city Parks and Recreation Department.

Public review of the draft master plan and the draft environmental impact report should be available by the end of 2005.

A map of the Arana Gulch project is posted online at [www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2005/July/28/local/images/arana.pdf](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2005/July/28/local/images/arana.pdf).

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