

Forum on bike-path plan draws crowd

Bicycle Paths
By NANCY CHIN

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Fans and critics of a proposed bicycle/pedestrian path through Arana Gulch gathered Sunday evening to devise a plan that would please everyone, but agreed only that they needed more time.

More time to explore options, more time for the city to complete a long-awaited greenbelt master plan and more time to meet again.

"It was a long period of discussion, but toward the end there was the beginning of consensus," said Ron Goodman of People Power, a local bicyclists' group that arranged the meeting. "I'm definitely more hopeful now."

The forum, attended by about three dozen people, called on environmentalists to work toward a solution, given their common interest of saving the earth.

Bicyclists in the crowd pledged to work with others to meet certain requirements that would protect the land.

At issue is how best to connect Broadway and Brommer for commuter bicycle traffic.

At issue is how best to connect Broadway and Brommer for commuter bicycle traffic in a way that encourages alternative transportation and provides a safer route than now exists on the city's congested east-west roads. A proposed 12-foot wide paved path through the Eastside greenbelt land has drawn fire from critics who say it would endanger precious habitats and wildlife and ruin the natural ambience of the area.

The Santa Cruz Transportation Com-

mission is scheduled to make a recommendation for a proposed route at their next meeting April 9. The city council will make the final call.

"It's a tremendous challenge," said Santa Cruz Councilwoman Celia Scott who attended the meeting along with other city staff. "It appears we have a head-on conflict, partly because of geographical facts we can't change."

People also called for the city to complete its long-range greenbelt plans.

Scott said a master plan is in the works and may be funded in the next budget year.

Jean Brock of Live Oak said she was glad she attended the meeting.

"I felt very good in this meeting," she said. "I got the sense that all the folks care deeply about the things they care about. ... But compromise is the wrong word. We have to come to a consensus and a united front."

Patricia Matejcek, a member of the Friends of Arana Gulch was a little skeptical. While she appreciated the dialogue at Sunday's meeting, she said

32497
"real solutions come with real players."

"We can decide anything we want in our treehouse," she said. But the next consensus-building meeting must include decision-making officials from every faction of the city that has interests at stake. Otherwise, there may be no leverage for implementing the consensus, she explained.