

VCF SCHOOLS RP 4/22/89



Pickers greeted regents as they arrived at Monte Vista Christian School yesterday. Story on page 11. Chip Scheuer

VCF WATSONVILLE GROWTH RP 4/22/89

# FUTURE

► From page 1

sumes the greatest amount of space and houses the fewest people, yet they also wanted the agricultural land preserved.

Several speakers from the audience said the city should look at increasing the density where housing already exists, a familiar refrain to Watsonville Mayor Betty Murphy, who was in the audience.

"When I hear about more infilling I just want to sit in the middle of the floor and cry," she said. "We are as dense as the city of Boston, and next to Carmel we are the most densely populated city in the Monterey Bay area."

Others spoke on how the lack of affordable housing for poor workers affects other facets of our society. Susan Olson of Pajaro Valley Shelter Services said that while the 1,500 units of affordable housing in Watsonville may meet government criteria, it is still a long way from meeting the need.

"The workers here provide food for the nation, and we owe them housing," Olson said. "We ought to take a look at the real population that works here."

Maria Perez, who spoke in Spanish while Silver translated so the predominantly Anglo audience could "feel how it is to be in our shoes," said a lot of the domestic violence and sexual abuse that goes on among low-income families is a result of inadequate housing.

"There are many houses that have three or four families living in them," Perez said. "Decisions that are made at the top affect those at the bottom."

Cruz Gomez said that the General Plan as it stands discriminates against women, laborers and other "disenfranchised" people. "Don't turn from an agricultural community into a white, rich ghetto," she said. Gomez said it was "bunk" that growth and housing problems can't be solved. "The city and the county have to get their heads together."

R-PAL maintains that the General Plan should be put on hold until a new city council is elected and a new steering committee organized.

Ted Remde was one of several speakers who addressed the issue of turning the St. Francis School site in the Interlaken District over to the Pajaro Valley School District. Reasons cited for opposing that plan were the development of an area that is mainly agricultural, and the nearby lake that poses a hazard to children.

VCF WATSONVILLE - GROWTH RP 4/22/89

# Differing views of the city's future

By RICHARD EGAN  
STAFF WRITER

There were no great surprises in store for those who attended last night's public forum on Watsonville's General Plan in regard to land use, community development and housing.

There isn't enough affordable housing for low- and middle-income families, agricultural land is being threatened by development, and the character of this relatively small farm town hangs in the balance as it tries to formulate a plan to grapple with growth that could double its population in the next 15 years.

Even less of a surprise for anyone familiar with the situation is that there are no easy solutions.

The forum at Alianza School, organized by Residents for Preservation of Agricultural Land, attracted about 50 people who had an opportunity to speak their piece and hear comments from a panel made up of public officials and members of the private sector who have an active interest in the direction the city takes as it moves toward the 21st century.

Members of the panel included

R-PAL members Rebecca Garcia and Robert Chacanaca, Francisco Juarez of the United Farm Workers, Jon Silver of Migrant Media, John Kane of the General Plan Steering Committee, LAFCO director Pat McCormick, Supervisor Sherry Mehl, Doug Spinelli of the city Planning Department, and John Warren of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

As could be expected, Watsonville city officials and the real estate business in general took it on the chin.

Chacanaca, who said he will be

a candidate for City Council under the recently imposed district format, told the crowd that Watsonville's working population is being systematically squeezed out of the local housing market, and that the General Plan being put together provides only "band-aid measures" that will help only 2 percent to 3 percent of those who need it.

"Profit-gouging, rent-gouging and real estate speculation must take a significant portion of the blame for housing that costs too much," Chacanaca said. "The cost of rent should not be allowed

to rise faster than workers' wages. To not establish a law like this is to favor real estate investors at the expense of working people."

Silver, who made the documentary film "Watsonville on Strike," went a step further with an admittedly "far-fetched" suggestion that "no one should own two homes until everyone owns one home," and suggested that the practice begin at Pajaro Dunes.

Silver was one of many who attacked the motives of real estate speculators, who buy and sell for profit and drive up prices at the expense of those who couldn't afford decent housing to begin with.

Supervisor Mehl said that the county already has very stringent policies when it comes to rezoning agricultural lands, and that residents here need to come to grips with what they'll have to compromise to keep this area liveable and affordable for everyone.

Spinelli, assistant planning director and community development coordinator for the city, said that a survey returned by some 300 residents revealed some interesting contradictions as to what they wanted to see in Watsonville's future.

Spinelli said that many of those responding said they wanted the single-family character of the area maintained, which con-

See FUTURE page 9 ►