

Santa Cruz Is 'Better Than Ever,' Says Ghio

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Sentinel Staff Writer

The city of Santa Cruz was "better than ever" in 1977, the 111th year of its incorporated history, Mayor Joseph John Ghio said Monday in a "state of the city" address to the public affairs group of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce.

But with adoption of a new general plan scheduled for this year and with a possible charter revision election facing the voters in June, Ghio said that 1978 will be the "year of decision" for the city's approximately 38,200 residents, and he added:

"I look forward to 1978 with great anticipation because it is the most important year in the recent history of Santa Cruz.

"Decisions made in the next 12 months will shape our city for ourselves and posterity for years into the future.

"I am sure I will remember 1978 as the year the course was set in making Santa Cruz an even better place to live than it is today."

Previously, with evident satisfaction in the work performed by the Santa Cruz City Council and its numerous advisory commissions, boards and committees, Ghio detailed a long list of 1977 accomplishments on behalf of the citizen government on behalf of the county's largest city.

Ghio said: "The year 1977 has to be characterized as the year the foundations were laid for the monumental decisions that the

council must make in 1978. "The most significant decision is the general plan decision because this decision will shape the city forever.

"Another significant decision is the charter revision. The council will determine in February what parts of the proposed charter revision to put on the ballot in a June election. The revisions, if approved, will have far-reaching impact."

Timber Zone Hearing Is Set

Public testimony from landowners whose rural acreage has been tentatively identified for timberland preserve zoning will be heard Wednesday night by the county Planning Commission.

The commission meets at 7 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building, 844 Front St.

Landowners will be given five minutes each to address the commission. The meeting is one of two scheduled this month for timberland zoning testimony and at the conclusion of the hearings, the commission will make recommendations to county supervisors on which parcels should be included in the new zoning.

The county assessor has identified 1,034 parcels, or about 90,000 acres, to be considered for as timberland preserve.

Mayor Wilson In Apts Talk

San Diego Mayor Pete

Both studies leading to the proposals now before the council were completed by citizens committees during Ghio's tenure as the city's 52nd mayor since incorporation.

The general plan revision was pushed vigorously by Ghio in 1977, who made it a practice virtually once a month at council meetings to ask when the plan review would be finished and presented to the council. Ghio noted all through 1977 that the plan revision was complex, but he kept the pressure on for completion nonetheless.

In 1977 as well, Ghio told the CofC group, the city redevelopment commission rejected a long-proposed plan for North Pacific Avenue development

into a regional shopping center in favor "of an auto plaza idea in a smaller area, and this study is now being conducted.

"The council called for continued planning to maintain the vitality of downtown. It authorized a study of utilizing second stories along the Pacific Avenue Garden Mall, and it confronted the 'atmosphere' and 'tone' issue on the mall."

Ghio then turned to water and said:

"The year 1977 was the year of water, it was a milestone year of great drought, and it was a milestone because it showed what the city can do when confronted by a challenge. We had tremendous cooperation from everyone in

meeting the challenge, with the people saving 57 percent of normal consumption. And we were able to save this without raising rates, at least to this point."

Ghio reported that in 1977 many other people recognized the quality of Santa Cruz. He said the city is a finalist for designation as an All-America City by the National League of Cities, that New West Magazine rated it as eighth best city of the west, that the city has won high honors for its historic preservation program, its housing programs, the neighborhood improvement program.

Ghio noted that in 1977 the city renewed the Southern Pacific Railroad franchise for 20 years under better terms than

hitherto and that the council devoted increasing time to budget and capital improvement program matters to make the development of these documents a cooperative council-staff effort rather than a staff effort alone.

During a question and answer period Ghio conceded the council has become more involved in administration than in the past, but he defended this strongly, calling it a loaded question and then asking: "What is elected government? I think our response is to the people who elected us. Some of their concerns may be administration and we have to deal with the concerns. Maybe we are dealing more and more in the administrative area."

Ghio said that insofar as he personally is concerned, the most important accomplishment of 1977 was establishing liaison with other governmental agencies to enable a more cooperative effort in solving problems.

Other accomplishments mentioned include: the Laurel Community Center, the Baskins housing project for the elderly in Dakota Avenue, development of the Bethany Curve greenbelt (a Ghio favorite because it was a neighborhood effort), completion of the West Cliff bike path.

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SC Mayor Remembers When...

In the 1940s in the city of Santa Cruz you could buy a 50-by-100 foot lot on Columbia Street for \$400, and boys living along that street had interesting times hunting for yellowjacket nests in the vacant lots.

That statement on the city that used to be made Monday by Mayor Joseph John Ghio during a "state of the city" address (see story above).

Reaching back into the past to get a basis for comparing the city of today to that of yesterday, Ghio said: "I was born in the city, I was raised in the city and I have spent most of my life in the city.

"When I was growing up in the 1940s Columbia Street was the Italian ghetto. You could buy 50-by-100 foot lots for \$200, \$300 and \$400, and there were two or three houses per block and many vacant fields.

"The boys used to hunt for yellowjacket

nests in those fields and we had contests to see who could get rid of the nests with the least number of stings.

"A highlight each year was when the street was improved. The streetscraper would come along and then there would be a truck with oil and then there would be a truck and a man to spread the sand. There were no curbs or gutters or sidewalks.

"Now look at the situation in 1977. Recently a 50-by-100 foot lot on Columbia Street, in the 300 block, near Pelton, was put on sale for \$35,000 and I think they sold it because the sign is down. The vacant land is virtually gone. So are the yellowjackets. And instead of an oil and gravel road we have permanent paving and there are curbs and gutters on the southwest side.

"Santa Cruz was a good place to grow up in in the 1940s, but it is an even better place today."



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