

# Beyond the Valley of the Electronics Park

Bob Johnson

It's all downhill from the Research Park: we're talking about the next moves to bring major developments to town. The Chancellor's plan to build an electronics park on the east ridge of the UCSC campus is already getting kicked around in public quite a bit. But the revived hopes of some San Francisco folks to build on the Pogonip, just down the hill from the would-be Research Park, have been kept fairly quiet. And pretty much nobody is talking about the early stages of a move to bring high density development to the lands just below the Pogonip. This last plan is being led by a candidate who should do fairly well in the November 8 SC City Council election with the help of an endorsement by the *Sentinel*.

Although these three developments will slog along at their separate roads, it's almost impossible to avoid the impulse to see everything at once.

If the electronics park is ever built, it will be the second largest employer in the County. The rest of the campus would still be the largest. Something fairly close to 10 percent of everybody working in the City of Santa Cruz in 1990 would be at this new facility. This project is so large that the decision to build more than 400 housing units next to it was no more than an afterthought.

It will use enough water to speed up the search for new sources by a few years. And it will take a few million bucks to build new pipes to remove all that funny water that gets created by electronics manufacturing at the place. The folks who work at this new place will also need a way to get there. That means . . .

A new road right through the Pogonip, which brings up a very old subject that is about to get revived. The Pogonip is owned by the Cowell Foundation, a nonprofit group that knows quite a bit about making money off its land.

In the early '60s the foundation had nothing to lose but its vacant land in a stagnant county and the profits of a boom economy to gain. Using the old hole-in-the-doughnut ploy, the Cowell Foundation sold land for the new campus to the state at "bargain basement prices" while holding on to thousands of acres surrounding the new employer.

As recently as 1978 the foundation had ambitious hopes for the 614 acres known as the Pogonip. As many as 1200 housing units were planned for the property and the local pols were scurrying around to make it possible. But a funny thing happened on the way to the condominiums.

The Pogonip became a *cause celebre* when this city passed the greenbelt initiative in 1979. There were photos and drawings of the land all over town during that campaign. All kinds of folks had it planted in their heads that the lord had already done close to a perfect job of developing the place.

Being no dummies, the San Francisco banker-lawyer types who run the Cowell Foundation cooled their collective jets for a while. But they were in town recently, trying to drum up support for a citizen's committee to decide what should be built on the Pogonip — and to help wage a campaign to amend the greenbelt ordinance we passed so that whatever it is could be built legally. A little further down

the hill is another development plan you'll be hearing about soon because . . .

It's being led by a City Council candidate. Jim Felich is one of the people trying to kick the progressive types out of office in the November 8 election. Although he's not real well known around here, his candidacy should do pretty well because the *Sentinel* and friends will line up behind Felich.

On August 4, a week before announcing his candidacy, Felich was at the City Planning Commission leading a move to rezone 22 acres at the bottom of Golf Club Drive for high density residential development. That's the funky little road that you take up to the Pogonip coming from the Harvey West area of town.

Right now there are five houses on the land, owned by six different folks. Because development of the area is tied up with the roads, water and sewers needed for controversial projects further up the hill, the planners at City Hall believed it would make sense to zone it for a total of 19 units maximum. The property owners, led by Felich, convinced the planning commission to rezone it for a maximum of 436

residential units.

The move to rezone this land started last May, when planning bureaucrats turned Felich down in his request for a lot split on his three acres near the bottom of Golf Club Drive. It seems the planners thought the land was good for two housing units max. Within three months, Felich had convinced the Planning Commission to a *priori* zoning that will allow an additional 58 units on his property.

Since the days when a convention center was proposed for Lighthouse Point and a suburban sprawl for the north coast, it's been the rule that people trying to develop their property don't run for office around here. Felich is out of town right now and was unavailable for comment on what's going up at the bottom of Golf Club Drive. But it seems likely that all the folks running in the November 8 election will be commenting quite a bit on the downhill side of the Research Park. □

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