

Sparring begins over UC research center

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SANTA CRUZ — Sparring began Tuesday in what may turn out to be a major dispute between the university administration and local residents and governments over UCSC's proposed research and development center.

Between 350 and 400 people packed the Nelson Center auditorium to hear city, county and neighborhood representatives express serious concerns and reservations about the impacts and implication of what Supervisor Gary Patton called a "major manufacturing facility" and a "land development scheme" on university property.

Patton, Santa Cruz City Councilmember Mardi Wormhoudt and Jonathon Wittwer of the Western Limits Neighborhood Association sat on a panel with UCSC's Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer, Wendell Brase, head of the committee directing the preliminary studies on the center, and Facilities Director Louis Fackler.

Sinsheimer said the forum, sponsored by environmental and neighborhood groups, was to open a dialogue with the community on the research center.

Such a center is needed, Sinsheimer said, because of serious financial problems at UCSC. It also would enhance academic programs, bringing fresh blood to the isolated school, he said.

As originally proposed last spring, the center would have been for pure research. A marketing feasibility study, done by a UC Berkeley professor's firm, the Land Economics Group, has found that the 550,000 square-foot center must be 40 percent research and 60 percent manufacturing to be profitable.

Firms whose research would mesh with school programs — bio-engineering, marine biology, computer software and scientific instrumentation have been mentioned — are in the front of the technological revolution and cannot afford to separate research and development facilities.

The study envisions the center employing some 2,000 people after its mid-1990s completion, adding about 200 jobs each year.

The university could earn from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million from leases annually, Brase said this morning.

Land would be leased to the firms, which would then build according to UCSC guidelines. UCSC's major resource is land, Sinsheimer said, and universities are increasingly dependent upon revenue they can raise through initiative and their own resources.

Sinsheimer acknowledged the center will have major impacts on water, sewer and energy use here, as well as housing, traffic and schools.

Specific figures will be generated by an environmental study, which is next in the planning process.

The chancellor pointed out the center would use only one-tenth the number of the county building permits annually, and one-sixth of the city's.

He also promised, as he has in the past, no research "directly related" to weapons development would be allowed. Patton and Wormhoudt were skeptical.

Wormhoudt asked about "indirectly-related" research. Patton pointed out that the Regents, who indirectly operate Lawrence Livermore Labs, can overrule a chancellor's decisions at any time.

Wittwer, first of the community's panelists to speak, raised a question all three touched on: that the university by state law can do anything it pleases on its property, without regard to local planning or zoning ordinances. He wanted some assurance from the chancellor that the dialogue was genuine, and that local concerns would indeed be included in the planning.



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Gary Patton and Mardi Wormhoudt.

Wormhoudt wanted a process spelled out through which the community can air its concerns. Sinsheimer has said no building would begin until local concerns are satisfied, but Wormhoudt's question about when exactly that was went unanswered.

Patton said that when the university is acting as a land developer, it should go through the same process as any other developer.

Patton also commented on the symbiotic relationship of the city, county and university to each other.

The campus is unique in the system, and has made Santa Cruz a unique community. If the university changes its mission and character, and becomes industry-oriented, Santa Cruz too will change.

"It's a question we have to grapple with, with or without the university," he

said. "Do we want to become an electronic suburb of San Jose or don't we?"

Sinsheimer said after the meeting that if a substantial proportion of the local community opposed the center, he would not even take the plans to the Regents.

Patton responded, "A substantial majority of what? Three-fifths of the board of supervisors?"

Mayor Michael Rotkin, a UCSC professor, said concern and opposition to the planned center is growing on campus among faculty and students. The forum was the third public discussion of the feasibility plan, which now exists only in draft form and has been unavailable for public scrutiny.

Final publication, originally set for mid-November, has been delayed for at least another week, university officials said.



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Chancellor Sinsheimer and Wendell Brase.