

# Cement plant's future debated

*Davenport*  
Davenport residents consider development

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**DAVENPORT** » Residents of the tiny town of Davenport got the chance Monday night to weigh in on a big problem: what to do with the idled Cemex Corp. cement plant.

Huddled in a meeting room at Pacific Elementary School, residents heard from the county and consultants looking at what to do with the plant, which last operated in 2010 but is still owned by Cemex, giving the Mexico City-based multinational sway over the land's future.

Stephen Wahlstrom, a consultant hired by the city, said the site has numerous challenges, from regulatory hurdles to pollution and more. But he also said the 109-acre site is a unique development opportunity.

"Basically, there's nothing like this on the entire California Coast," Wahlstrom said.

PLANT » PAGE 3

## Plant

FROM PAGE 1

Once the plant closed, zoning on the site reverted to a category that would allow an estimated nine homes to be built there. Changing that zoning would require altering the county's master plan and coastal plan, and the hurdles get higher from there.

Wahlstrom said it would take a developer with deep pockets to tear down as many as 20 buildings, clean the property of kiln dust and other pollutants, and develop a steep site with no direct coastal access.

"We're about 25 percent

done (with the reuse study)," Wahlstrom said. "We don't have any answers yet. We will. We don't have any recommendations yet. We will."

One resident suggested a "world-class environmental lab," though it was unclear how to pay for the conversion. Another suggested three guideposts: San Francisco's Fort Baker, the Tanner Arts Center and Long Marine Laboratory.

### Costs

But many seemed taken aback by the message that the high cost — no estimates were ready, but it is likely multiples of millions — means economic development has to be considered if the plant is to be anything

other than a rusted hulk on the silhouette of an otherwise pristine North Coast, owned by an absentee landlord.

"In part, we're messengers to you of economic reality," Wahlstrom said.

Ideas for reuse fall into several categories, and likely will include a number of facets. They could include light industrial, visitor accommodations (the idea of a hotel already has been floated), and Davenport's overwhelming choice — some type of educational facility.

"The import thing is that the plant gets cleaned up and (has) the least amount of impact on our town; in other words, new cars, new buildings, new hustle and bustle

all over," said Neal Stokes, a Davenport resident.

For years, Cemex not only provided a local source of jobs but helped underwrite the cost of the town's water. But it was also a polluter, and the plant's closure enabled Santa Cruz County to meet state-mandated greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Cemex already sold the 8,500-acre property known as the Cemex Redwoods, which is being converted to open space. That property is adjacent to the 5,000-acre Bureau of Land Management-owned Coast Dairies open space area, forming an attractive strip of coastal ranges that serve to focus attention on reuse of the plant.