

✓ PORTER-SESNON

Mello's

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park plan^B

for coast

property

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One of the last major parcels of undeveloped land on Santa Cruz County's coastal bluffs above Monterey Bay could become part of California's park system if the local state senator has his way.

The Porter Sesnon property, once the focus of a major political battle over the proposal to build the Wingspread hotel, conference and performing arts center, might be available for about \$3.5 million, according to state Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville. The land belongs to a bank that obtained it during the bankruptcy proceedings of the Palo Alto development firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, Mello said.

Between two parks

Across Highway 1 from Cabrillo College, the 66-acre parcel sits between two existing state parks — New Brighton Beach and Seacliff Beach.

"State Parks understands what an opportunity this is," Mello said, outlining two things have to happen before a purchase could occur:

■ The bank that owns the land must sign a letter of intent to sell the property for a reasonable price. Mello said he expects the price to be far below the \$13 million Hare, Brewer and Kelley once sought for the site. When the price was much higher, Mello managed to get \$4 million in state funds earmarked for the purchase — which was never consummated because the developer wanted far more than the appraised value of the property, he said. That money is no longer available.

■ Money must be found in the tight state budget. "I'm looking around to see where there might be funds," he said. "We're looking at the tobacco tax, at offshore oil revenues and to see if any bond act money might be sitting around."

Mello said he tells fellow legislators that the state will "never get another chance to buy such an important piece of land for such a reasonable price."

Top priority

Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton noted that both the California Coastal Plan and the county general plan give top priority to park use for the site.

Patton and the rest of the board of supervisors voted Tuesday to endorse Mello's legislation to appropriate an unspecified sum to the state Department of Parks and Recreation. That money, if the measure — SB 200 — is signed into law, and if funds are found, would be allocated to add the Porter Sesnon land to New Brighton Beach.