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UCSC - Monterey Bay Campus

UCSC R&D center at Fort Ord

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Land-use, business plan under way

SANTA CRUZ — The future is taking shape for an innovative research and technology project planned by the University of California for the former Fort Ord military base.

A second consulting group hired by UC Santa Cruz project managers is already working on a comprehensive land use and business plan for the project. Economic & Planning Systems of Berkeley, was hired in late 1995 to explore the logistics of making a reality the Monterey Bay Education, Science, and Technology Center, the MBEST Center, at the coastal property north of Monterey.

"The business plan will be a strategic blueprint to help link Fort Ord and the Monterey Bay region to emerging high-technology markets," said James Bumback, lead consultant for Economic & Planning Systems on the MBEST study.

The MBEST Center as envisioned by planners would develop over the next half century and eventually encompass several million square feet of space in buildings for research and development, industry, offices, retail, education and housing.

The project could generate 3,000 new jobs in the next two decades and as many as 12,000 eventually. Along with the newly opened California State University, Monterey Bay campus at the Fort Ord site, MBEST as been heralded as a key toward successful reuse of the

army base and of regional economic development for the next century.

The university already had hired San Francisco-based DRI/McGraw Hill in October to begin a marketing survey that is to assess how Santa Cruz County and the rest of the Monterey Bay area attract business, especially the "clean" industry MBEST is aiming at.

Clean industry refers to non-polluting companies such as environmental, biomedical, or research-oriented businesses.

The UC Fort Ord Project is paying Economic & Planning Systems \$335,000 for its study. The project had already agreed to pay DRI/McGraw Hill \$325,000. The money for the consultants is coming from a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

This survey could eventually give Santa Cruz County employers information about how the local business climate is perceived by outside companies and how the local economy compares to other regions.

The MBEST Center will concentrate on four market niches, according to the team planning the project: environmental science, technology, and instrumentation, especially coastal applications; biotechnology, emphasizing agricultural and marine applications; information science and technologies; and multimedia education and entertainment.

The UC Fort Ord Project team chose the four because they either play to existing regional strengths or for their growth potential.

The center, according to planners, would draw from existing marine and environmental science institutions and labs. The project's mission statement notes it would make use of he 20 public and private educational and research institutions around Monterey Bay that already employ more than 1,500 natural and social scientists.

It would also take advantage of the three U.S. Navy centers in Monterey and would incorporate technology in nearby Silicon Valley and agricultural research and practices in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

The MBEST Center, according to UCSC officials involved in its planning, might eventually provide an alternative to commuting to Silicon Valley for some skilled local residents seeking employment in clean industries without having to leave this area.

UCSC is the lead campus in developing the MBEST Center. Administrators from the campus are supposed to present a blueprint for the MBEST project to UC's Board of Regents in 1997.

"The Regents have asked us to develop a project that is market driven, financially feasible, and self-sustaining," said Mark Coburn, MBEST's director of technology transfer and business plan-

ning. "It must build on the competitive strengths of UC Santa Cruz and the UC system, and it must make positive contributions to the economy of the Monterey Bay region and the state. The business plan will flesh out our concepts for the MBEST Center in all of these areas."

The Economic & Planning Systems report will focus on:

- A revised master plan for land use;
- A strategic development plan for the first five years of the project;
- A business plan with short- and long-term projections of financial resources — mainly generated from the project itself;
- Agreements and jurisdictional understandings with neighboring municipalities and government agencies;
- A telecommunications plan for making the center a hub of advanced communications infrastructure and technologies;
- Strategies for marketing, developing and operating the center and for communicating with legislators and financiers and other key players.

MBEST will have plenty of room to spread its wings. At present, UCSC's plan calls for developing the industrial research and technology center on 485 acres, part of a grant of 1,090 acres from the U.S. Army to the University of California. The remaining 605 acres will become part of the UC Natural Reserve System and preserved as coastal chaparral.