

## A look at 'Third floor' government



### What's on third floor?

The third floor of the County Government Center building at Santa Cruz had, until recently, been kept vacant for expansion of existing governmental departments. In recent years, a new type of public service department has come into being, which are funded in large part by the federal government. A number of these "new" departments occupy the third floor. What are these departments? Are they performing a necessary service? The Valley Press editorial staff zeroed in on these questions last week. The result of the investigation is given in the article below. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO.

# Are third floor occupants needed?

By The Valley Press Staff

Critics of local government sometimes call the third floor of the County Government Center the "funny floor." They don't laugh when they say it. They see the offices there as a colossal waste of taxpayers' money.

When the center was built about eight years ago, the third floor was left vacant for expansion of existing county offices.

Since then, however, there has been a new, fast-growing type of public services office that has come into being. It feeds off of federal and state funds, as well as county tax monies.

Most of the departments on the third floor are of this "new breed" of office. They are:

-The Museum Without Walls, set up expressly to foster the arts. It has a \$104,000 annual budget, more than half of which goes for wages.

-Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services, a department whose purpose is to start county parks in a county that already has more land off the tax roll in state parks than any other county in California.

-The Coastal Commission, a state agency established to prepare a plan of the coastline that may, or may not, be adopted by the state legislature for implementation. The plan is not yet finished, but the commission already is seeking to continue its life several years, or perhaps indefinitely.

-Neighborhood Youth Employment Service, which spends about \$11 million in federal funds to create jobs for teenagers in an area where the unemployment rate for adults is probably about 15 per cent.

-County Civilian Defense, an office set up to protect us in case of nuclear attack. How about a major earthquake or forest fire?

-The Sheriff's Office, the fastest growing department in the county, second only to the skyrocketing crime rate.

-County Department of Mechanical Services, with a \$2 million budget, to keep the governmental center clean and the autos in the car pool running.

Is this a fair analysis? Is it, as the critics say, a colossal waste of taxpayers' money?

Probably not. The above material is true, but it is also an oversimplification. It was written purposely in a critical vein, to spark interest and also to focus on the problem.

In an attempt to get at the truth in the matter, The Valley Press staff zeroed in on the problem and, hopefully, will put the matter in better perspective.

Here is the result of our investigative work:

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## Taking Aim



by craig robinson