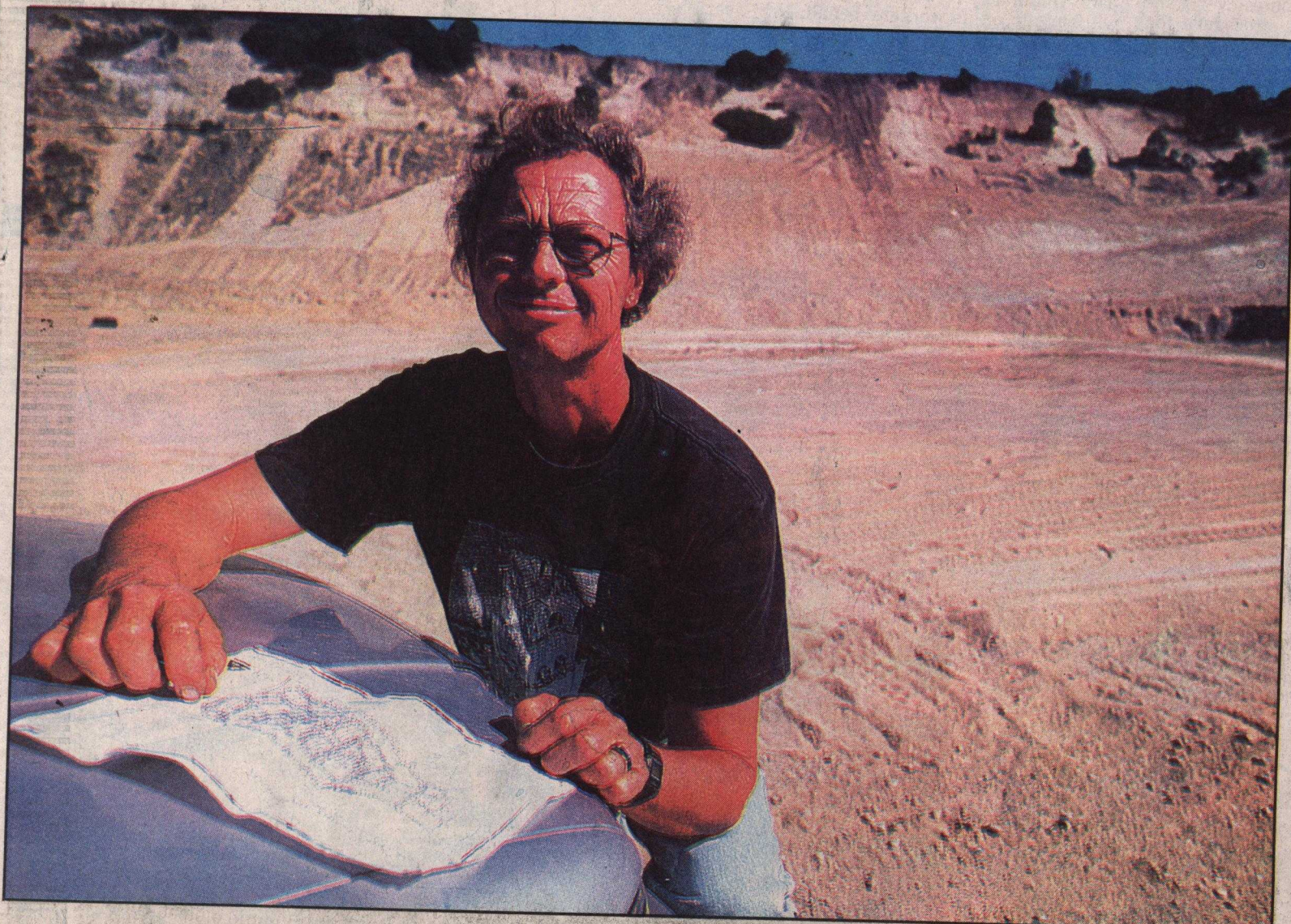


High density



Bob Holter on-site with plans for 112 affordable apartments in Scotts Valley.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Low-rent district raises SV fears

By KAREN CLARK
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Scotts Valley 1990

SCOTTS VALLEY — A large, angry crowd denounced plans to build 112 affordable apartments along Lockhart Gulch Road at Sky-park, heckling proponents of the idea and wildly applauding speakers who castigated it. "What we're creating here is a slum," said Debbie Mandella, who lives on Mount Hermon Road. "Projects are projects, they don't work. ... It's a universal fact: Where there's no ownership, there's no pride."

Critics of the proposal listened for more than four hours Thursday during a meeting

of the Planning Commission, which is expected to make a recommendation to the City Council after another public hearing on Sept. 28.

Kaufman and Broad designed the apartment complex, a condominium-like project that sits on a 12-acre site just below the subdivision of 190 single-family homes the same developer is building on the upper portion of the Sky-park area.

Many speaking against the proposal were county residents who live just outside the city limits in the Lockhart Gulch Road area. The apartment project is just within the city lim-

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its, near the huge bluff that is a favorite place for hunters of prehistoric shark-teeth.

"I'm an escapee from the Santa Clara Valley ... and I see this as the city coming back to me," said Lockhart Gulch Road resident Jim Wiggins.

The city's General Plan calls for high-density housing at the site, and Kaufman and Broad could have requested permission to build as many as 148 units.

Still, the apartment proposal could unravel because the council ensured it would have the final say by demanding that any project

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Fear expressed in Scotts Valley

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proposed for the site must be re-zoned planned development. That zoning label requires that any project be approved by the council, even if it meets the high-density zoning regulations spelled out in the General Plan.

Although the council has long supported affordable housing for the site, other factors could lead it to reject the project. Chief among those are the dwindling capacity at the city's sewer plant and the question of whether there is enough water in the Santa Margarita aquifer to support continued growth.

"The sewer capacity question is a temporary problem, but I think it's something we've got to deal with before we hook up that many more people," said Councilwoman Peggie Lopez on Friday. "Unfortunately it could have the effect of killing that particular project."

The reason for that is two-fold:

- Kaufman and Broad must win approval of the affordable housing project by Nov. 1 to qualify for the federal tax credits the company is relying on to offset building costs.

- The council must weigh this time line against the reality that the city's sewer plant is operating very close to capacity. An expansion won't be finished until late 1996, and council members may be reluctant to approve such a large development this year.

Norman Schwartz, the consultant who helped write the entire Skypark plan, thinks Kaufman and Broad might be able to accept approval now, but delay building.

Although several speakers expressed concern about potential traffic, sewer and water problems, most appeared concerned that an

affordable housing complex could increase crime, reduce property values and become a hangout for gang members.

"(Scotts Valley) is a very special place, and I think it's going to change if this goes through," said Jeanne Vrolyk, a Lockhart Gulch Road resident. "No one, if they were honest, would say, 'Oh, yeah, I want low-cost housing in my neighborhood.'"

Vrolyk asked that "if the city must have low-cost ... housing, could you spread it around a little bit?"

Vice Mayor Joe Miller said on Friday that he was upset by the tone of some of the criticism, especially by the "insulting" notion that renters can't take pride in their home. He said he was "not going to listen" to complaints about affordable housing.

The sewer issue, however, would be one that could derail the project, he said. "The fact is we may not approve any more development until the sewer plant is finished."

Bob Holter, a Geyer Road resident, lambasted the notion that affordable housing would be good for the city.

He suggested that people who live in these projects are "not ever able to work," and asked why the city doesn't do more for "people who work for a living." He envisioned a time when youth gangs "will run the complex."

He said the city has a "moral, legal and social responsibility to provide housing for people who live and work" in town.

Mayor Michael Shulman said Friday there are legitimate concerns about the proposal, but the

people who might live in the affordable housing was not one of them.

"A bunch of Watsonville farm workers are not going to move in here, because there's no reason for them to," said Shulman. "This is for people who already work in Scotts Valley. ... If we can provide more affordable housing, then people can live a better lifestyle."

City planner Kathryn Caldwell said a family would have to make at least \$19,000 a year to qualify for a one-bedroom apartment. That could mean one adult with a job paying about \$9 an hour.

Schwartz said statistics reveal that 53 percent of the city's households would qualify to live in the complex, which would include units of up to four bedrooms.

"There's a Puritan ethic here that you are defined by the money you make, and I think that's absolutely incorrect," said Miller. "That's bad theology and bad politics."

Caldwell, who faced down hecklers Thursday during her report, said, "I know the anxiety is high ... because it's the largest apartment complex this city has seen."

She asked opponents to make an effort "to work it out as best we can."

Scotts Valley resident Wendy Brannan chastised audience members, most of whom didn't attend the eight years of public meetings that led to the high-density designation for this site.

Neighbors opposing the apartment complex plan are to meet Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Scotts Valley Senior Center, 370 Kings Village Road.