

# Section of greenbelt sparks debate, again

## Piece of Arana Gulch could go up for sale

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SANTA CRUZ — People living near Arana Gulch were “floored” to learn that 6 acres have been cut from the Eastside meadow, and speculation quickly arose that the city will sell the land to private developers.

Arana Gulch, a 63-acre chunk of land, is one of the few city-owned greenbelts on the Eastside. The city bought Arana Gulch in 1994.

“The assumption is that it’s going to be sold,” said Marshall Doud, whose home sits on the corner of Agnes Street and Mentel Avenue, across

from the greenbelt’s north entrance. “But that’s never been stated to the public.”

At a meeting last week for the public to offer input on Arana Gulch’s long-term management, residents were caught off guard when they discovered that the area within 300 feet along Agnes Street and the Park Way alley had been dropped from the master plan.

“We don’t understand what this is about,” said Patricia Matejcek of the local chapter of the Sierra Club. “Economically we don’t understand it,

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The city of Santa Cruz has excluded nearly 6 acres along Agnes Street from the master plan of the Arana Gulch meadow.

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## Arana

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environmentally we don’t understand it, historically we don’t understand it. We’re floored.”

Opposing sides have fought for years over a proposed pedestrian-bike path paved across the gulch that connects the city’s east and west sides. Now, the 6-acre exclusion has created more controversy, which is nothing new for the meadow.

City Council members decided in 1996 to exclude 6 acres from the north end of Arana Gulch while exploring possible revenue-raising tactics that included building new homes on the site.

The council dropped the housing idea in 2000, but council members changed, and the city’s financial situation became more dire during the next three years, causing the excluded 6 acres to again become part of the park’s plan.

In October 2003, the council unanimously agreed to keep 6 acres “undesignated” while also directing the Parks and Recreation Department to begin draft-

ing a management plan for the rest of Arana Gulch.

On Wednesday, Councilwoman Emily Reilly, who was mayor in 2003, said excluding the 6 acres allows the council the right to do something else with that end of the gulch.

Reilly said no conversations have taken place about selling the land.

“If someone wants to sell that part of the gulch, they haven’t said so to me,” she said. “I wouldn’t want to sell. I don’t know why we would do that.”

Diane Kinzli said her family was forced to sell Arana Gulch to the city in 1994 because the greenbelt designation imposed in 1979 severely limited development. Kinzli believes it’s wrong for city leaders to sell any portion of the land now.

“When you covet someone else’s land, that’s wrong to begin with,” she said. “Now that they have it, they should keep it. The city said we can’t use it for anything but a greenbelt, neither should they.”

The greenbelt designation was passed by city voters in 1979 as a way to allow the city to buy several open spaces around the city. Besides Arana Gulch, Moore



Diane and Ernie Kinzli once owned greenbelt property at Arana Gulch.

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Sentinel file

Creek, Harvey West Park, DeLaveaga and the Bombay property were declared greenbelts, said Ken Thomas of the city Planning Department.

What to do with the exempted 6 acres won’t be decided by city leaders until the master plan is completed.

Uses for Arana Gulch in the proposed master plan, so far, include management for the endangered tarplant, a trail system with signage, continuing to not allow dogs off leash and no new parking, said

Susan Harris of the city Parks and Recreation Department.

Ultimately, the Arana Gulch master plan must pass the City Council and the California Coastal Commission. Neither group is expected to be presented with the plan until 2006, Harris said.

Public review of the draft master plan and the draft environmental impact report should be available by the end of 2005.

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