

# Greenbelt Land purchase suffers setback

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Governor's veto leaves Santa Cruz short of funding

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Santa Cruz's prospects for buying 246 acres of coastal pasture for public parkland suffered a serious setback with Gov. Pete Wilson's decision to strike a \$1 million funding request from the budget he signed last week.

Under an agreement with the landowner, Bombay Corp. of Fresno, San-

ta Cruz must come up with \$3.9 million by November to buy the property on the city's western edge, which voters earmarked for greenbelt acquisition in 1979. Otherwise, the city must consider approval of a 25-home luxury subdivision on the lower part of the land.

Without the state funding, Santa Cruz is more than \$2 million short of the purchase price, meaning the city's

hopes of acquiring the land must rely more heavily on the generosity of voters and private donors.

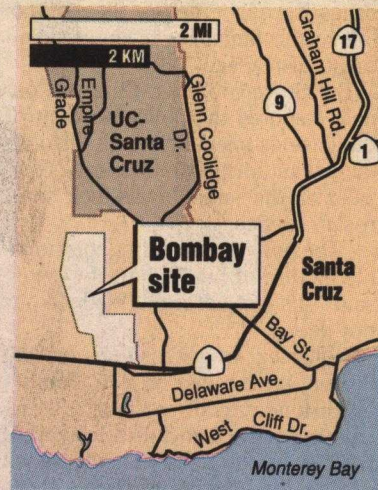
State Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, who has lobbied heavily for the Bombay money, said there is a chance the governor will restore the funding request, introduced in the lower house by Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Santa Cruz. The request was among nearly \$1.5 billion Wilson

blue-penciled from his record \$75.4 billion spending plan.

"This is really important for the city of Santa Cruz," said McPherson, who discussed the matter with Wilson on Wednesday. "I told him this was the No. 1 item on my radar screen. I don't want to present any false hopes, but I think we have a good shot at it."

Even before the governor vetoed the Bombay funding, however, Santa Cruz faced a difficult challenge to buy the land. Santa Cruz already has

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pledged \$1 million toward the purchase and is expecting a \$250,000 grant, leaving a \$2.65 million gap.

The city has pinned much of its hopes for making up the difference on passage of a \$5.9 million bond measure on the Nov. 3 ballot, which will require approval by two-thirds of voters. If approved, Measure G funds would be split among renovating the city's fire stations, buying the Bombay land and building a new urban park, with any leftover revenue going toward new fire department headquarters.

City officials packaged the projects in one bond measure because surveys showed it would improve chances for approval. The surveys found that none of the projects alone could generate the support needed to pass.

Without state funding for the Bombay purchase, there probably would not be enough bond revenue left for the fire headquarters. That prospect may alienate some voters who are more interested in the city's infrastructure than the greenbelt, and thus hurt the measure's chances at the polls.

Private fundraising efforts, meanwhile, have not come up with nearly enough to make up for the loss in state funding. A fundraising campaign launched last fall has so far raised only \$42,000, said Laura Perry, executive director of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, which is organizing the effort.

"Those are pretty modest dollars when you're looking at a \$2.65 million shortfall," Perry said. "Our energies need to be committed even more furiously toward passage of the bond measure."

The governor has until the end of the legislative session Monday to restore the vetoed funding, said McPherson aide Tricia Meade.

If the money is not raised, the city will be forced to review plans Bombay Corp. has to develop a 25-home subdivision with recreational facilities on the property. The plan is expected to come before the city council in late October or early November.

That plan, which would leave 200 acres in open space, came out of settlement negotiations with the city after five years of litigation. But the plan is unpopular with local greenbelt advocates who say it would sell out the city's greenbelt goals. If the city does not buy the land or approve the proposed development, however, city leaders say the Bombay Corp. could build at least seven homes throughout the property, leaving none of it in open space.