

38th & Brommer: Neighborhood at a crossroads

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On Monday morning, clean laundry flapped from lines hanging outside several homes on 38th Avenue between Brommer Street and Capitola Road.

"I'm old-fashioned," said George Fitzgerald, of of 1404 38th Ave. "I like my laundry to

'Capitola is like cancer — it just grabs. But you have to roll with the punches. The only thing is, they can't force us out.'

— George Fitzgerald

dry with the sun."

George and his wife, Louise, and their two small children moved to 38th Avenue shortly after World War II. George built the garage, a place for the family to live, while he finished the house.

"We had a cow, we had a horse, we had pigs and we had chickens. We were rural," Louise said. "We were out in the country, honey. Santa Cruz was the city over there. It didn't last."

King's Plaza now sits just around the corner from their green, one-story house and the Capitola Mall is just up the street.

But change is coming even closer to the Fitzgeralds and their neighbors. A developer holds permits to build 20 condominiums on the pampas-grass-covered lot next door to the Fitzgeralds, at the corner of Brommer and 38th.

Arlo Gibson lives across the street from them. He and his wife bought their land in 1942. At that time, just a few homes dotted the landscape. A huge grove of eucalyptus trees graced the land that became King's Plaza.

"The rest was all bare land," Gibson said. "Clear down to the railroad that was nothing but bare land."

In the late '40s Gibson rented what is now the Blue and Gold Mobile Home Park and grazed his dairy cows there.

If development plans are carried through, Gibson will soon have townhouses and condominiums on either side of the house he built with his own

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Photos by Kurt Ellison

George Fitzgerald moved to 38th Avenue with his family after World War II — when it was still country.