

City Council signs off on path through Arana Gulch

Paved trail would link east, west S.C.

By **SHANNA MCCORD** •

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Greenbelt 7-1206
✓ **SANTA CRUZ** — The debate over the future of Arana Gulch — a showdown between environmental supporters Tuesday night — came down in favor of paving a path through the heart of the 63-acre greenbelt.

The City Council faced an overflow crowd and listened to about 60 people passionately argue all sides of a plan for the Eastside meadow before voting unanimously to move the project forward. Councilman Ed Porter was absent.

The draft master plan increases public use of the greenbelt by building several new trails in Arana Gulch, including a half-mile paved path connecting the city's east and west sides and a 330-foot suspension bridge spanning Hagemann Gulch.

Plans also call for interpretive signs in the greenbelt and creating a management program for the state and federally endangered tarplant — a small, daisy-like plant that grows throughout the area.

Council members also approved changing the greenbelt's zoning designation from single-family residential to parks and natural area. They also certified the final environmental impact report for the draft master plan.

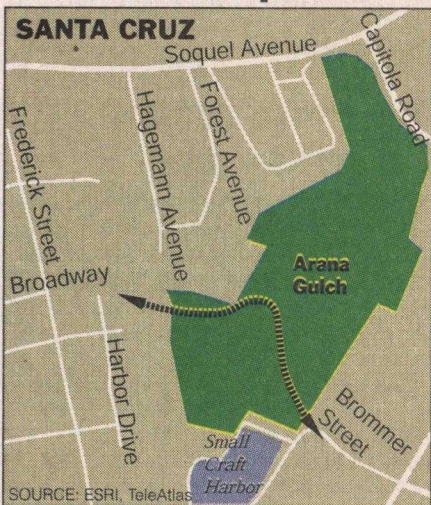
The greenbelt, which sits between the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor and Agnes Street, was bought in 1994 by the city for \$3.4 million.

People favoring the plans presented by the city Parks and Recreation Department talked Tuesday night about how a paved path linking Brommer Street with Broadway would provide a safer and more direct route across town for bicyclists, pedestrians and people using wheelchairs.

"There are very few places you can go that are wheelchair accessible that don't have cars going by," said resident Joe Quigg, who uses a wheelchair.

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Arana Gulch plan



Max DeNike/Sentinel graphic

The Santa Cruz City Council signed off Tuesday night on a paved path through the Arana Gulch greenbelt between Brommer Street and Broadway.

Arana

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Critics said paving a trail through the greenbelt would destroy the tarplant, harm natural wildlife in the area and be tantamount to building a road across the meadow.

"There are lots of places you can put a bike path," Peggy Waters told the council. "You can do this someplace else, it doesn't have to go over the tarplant."

One woman asked, "How would John Muir vote on this issue? I think I know the answer."

Harbor High School student J.T. Beggs quoted wilderness writer Edward Abbey when speaking to the council.

"Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity," Beggs said. "It's truly one of the last quiet, secluded places I know."

However, supporters say the path will benefit the region, not just the city.

"If we're not going to widen Highway 1, we need to build the bike path to get some of those drivers out of my way," said Jack Kaplan.

'There are lots of places you can put a bike path. You can do this someplace else, it doesn't have to go over the tarplant.'

PEGGY WATERS,
WHO SPOKE AGAINST
PAVED PATH

The Arana Gulch plans must be presented to the state Coastal Commission for final approval. A hearing date should be set within the next few months.

If the commission approves the plans, the city Public Works Department would begin working on final design and construction drawings for the paved path and bridge.

The soonest construction could begin at Arana Gulch is mid-2007, city officials said.

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Pedestrians traverse Arana Gulch from Brommer Street near the harbor boatyard.

Dan Coyo/Sentinel