



Search



SaveBAREC Denies "No On Seniors" Charge

By Carolyn Schuk

SC Weekly Services

Advertise with Online Ads
Fictitious Biz Name
Ads
Free Online
Classified Ads!
Print Classified Ads
SC Weekly Staff

FEATURES

Milestones
No Guarantees
Work Daze
Police Report

LOCAL LINKS

Around Santa Clara
Blog Spot
City of Santa Clara
Lottery
Office of Education
Parks & Recreation
Santa Clara Library
Santa Clara Police
School Districts
Triton Museum of Art

ELECTED

OFFICIALS

Your elected officials

SPORTS

49'ers
Oakland Raiders
San Francisco Giants
San Jose Sabercats
San Jose Sharks
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara High School
Wilcox High School

SaveBAREC denies the charge that opposition to the proposed Santa Clara Gardens development plan for BAREC – the 17-acre former UC agricultural station -- equates to opposition to affordable senior housing.

"It's untrue," says SaveBAREC spokesman Kirk Vartan, pointing to SaveBAREC supporters like long-time community activist and City Cultural Commissioner Jackie Moore. "I think it's quite the opposite."

Development supporters leveled the charge at the group spearheading opposition to the development at Yes on Measures A&B rally in November. These measures go to the voters on the February, 2008 ballot and enact the zoning and general plan changes to allow the project to go forward.

It's the current development plan specifically that SaveBAREC opposes – not all development.

"The Santa Clara Gardens project has a limited senior component," explains Vartan. "It's two-thirds of the units but 20 percent of the overall space.

"We've put forward a number of concepts on alternatives that could be entertained – a public space, the urban agricultural proposal, a mixed use property," he continues. "If the project is turned down there's no reason the senior portion of the development can't remain."

Another reason for opposition to the project is its legacy of rumored closed-door decision-making starting in 1999.

Some say that the station was closed as a result of "backroom deals" when UC officials "traded BAREC for a \$2 million annual funding increase," according to a story by Vrinda Normand in the October 19, 2005 edition of the San Jose Metro. Former State Senator John Vasconcellos, Normand reported, described this process in his correspondence on the subject as "truly abominable" and "utterly untenable."

The chairman of Summerhill Homes, the Santa Clara Gardens developer, incidentally, is also a UC Regent.

"Process has been one of the big problems of this entire project," says Vartan. "There were a lot of closed door meetings before the public was engaged. Only one project has been pushed for the last five years. Summerhill locked it up in March 2003."

Vartan hopes that defeating the two ballot measures will effect a fresh start for the 17 acre property.

"We can start fresh and engage the community with fresh ideas, not just one idea," says Vartan.

"I think it's important to remember that land is a non-renewable resource. If housing is the right choice, it can always be done in the future. If the [Santa Clara Gardens] project is done today, all future options expire."

For more information about BAREC, visit www.santaclaraca.gov and select "Current Issues" under "City Gov." See what proponents and opponents have to say at www.90winchester.com and www.savebarec.org. The Weekly's coverage of the issue is available at www.santaclaraweekly.com.

Carolyn Schuk can be reached at cschuk@earthlink.net.