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Santa Clara Measures A & B

PRO : BAREC WILL NEVER BE OPEN SPACE, BUT IT CAN PROVIDE HOUSING FOR SENIORS

By Rod Diridon Sr., Alice K. Sutton and David Tobkin

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On Feb. 5, voters in Santa Clara will have the opportunity to exhibit local control and affirm the unanimous decision by all voting city council members in June 2007 to approve a community-based plan for the vacant, fenced-off and dilapidated state-owned property at 90 N. Winchester Blvd. (formerly known as the BAREC property).

These two measures will provide affordable senior housing, family homes, landscaped gardens and a public park that our city so badly needs. It will also clean up the toxins that exist on the property that used to house the Bay Area Research and Extension Center. Most important, the measures will not require a tax increase or cost the city's general fund one penny.

Over the past five years, the city and the community have engaged in a very methodical and inclusive outreach process. From several community meetings and public hearings, various site plan options and planning principles were evaluated, resulting in the council adopting a set of planning principles that are the foundation of the Santa Clara Gardens proposal.

Santa Clara clearly has a need for affordable housing for its senior citizens. A year ago, the Santa Clara Methodist Retirement Foundation opened a waiting list for one-bedroom apartments. Over 100 seniors signed up within 90 minutes, many standing in line overnight in the rain. Once on the list,

seniors typically face a wait of two to four years. The seniors who raised their families in this community deserve to retire here, close to family and friends. The Winchester Boulevard location is ideal for senior housing, as it is close to public transportation and within walking distance of drug and grocery stores, banks and shopping. Since most seniors prefer to walk to local amenities, the impact on traffic is minimized. This proposal provides a unique intergenerational community where seniors can interact with families and children at a new neighborhood park.

Because of Santa Clara Valley's agricultural history, most new housing proposals require toxic remediation and removal of tainted soil - Rivermark and Santana Row faced these challenges and underwent comprehensive cleanups to safeguard the area for future residents.

This land was used by the state as an agricultural research facility, so the city and Santa Clara Gardens' proponents were not surprised to learn from the comprehensive Environmental Impact Report that pesticides are present in the soil. The EIR specifies how the cleanup must proceed in order to meet the highest standards for residential use. The state's Department of Toxic Substances Control must re-test the land and certify it as safe before a single residence is built.

Unlike many local ballot measures, Measures A and B do not invoke a tax increase. Not only will this project pay for itself, but it also will generate an additional \$70,000 annually to the city's general fund. This is funding that can be used for needed city services in neighborhoods across Santa Clara.

This matter is on the ballot because opponents of Measures A and B are exercising their right in the democratic process. It is important to note, however,

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that their campaign rhetoric is not accurate when it comes to what will happen if Measures A and B fail. The state of California owns this land, and state officials have made it very clear, in writing, that if Measures A and B fail, they have no intention of selling the land for a reduced price in order to support an organic farm, garden or other proposal. Voting "no" means that the land will remain toxic and dilapidated until the state uses it for another state facility - which would not require review or approval by the city of Santa Clara.

Please join us, Mayor Patricia Mahan, Santa Clara's firefighters and police officers, the Santa Clara County League of Conservation Voters and thousands of residents in supporting Measures A and B to clean up the toxins to strict environmental agency standards and to provide the affordable senior housing Santa Clara needs - at no cost to taxpayers.

ROD DIRIDON SR. is a former Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors representative for District 4. ALICE K. SUTTON is executive officer of the Santa Clara Methodist Retirement Foundation. DAVID TOBKIN is treasurer of Santa Clarans for Fiscal Responsibility.

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