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Don't build homes on BAREC

ANTI : WE CAN TAKE CHARGE OF GUIDING FUTURE USE OF REMAINING OPEN SPACE

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Some people say you can't stop so-called progress. But in Santa Clara, voters can.

On Tuesday, Santa Clara voters can choose to steer progress instead of stopping it. And, that is exactly what a "no" vote on Measures A and B is all about. It allows voters to take control before all is lost. It means taking control of the destiny of the last 17 acres of agricultural-zoned land in the city.

The development plan forever removes the opportunity of having green, open space for all citizens and an island of solitude in the midst of the hustle and bustle of already crowded Winchester Boulevard. According to the 2000 U.S. census, the area surrounding the site "faces a deficiency of parks and open space of approximately 250 acres."

In place of this much-needed green space, the plan packs 16 homes per acre (taking into account the new streets) and it brings boatloads of new cars to Winchester Boulevard, the only entrance and exit for the site. How does this affect us? Sooner or later, it will add pollution and traffic, and put a drain on city services.

Santa Clara citizens also get short-changed because the majority of the revenue will go to the state and SummerHill Homes, the private housing developer. The state, which owns the property, keeps the

revenue from the sale of the land. SummerHill will make millions in profit, and the city is left with, at most, a measly \$73,000 per year. This won't even cover the starting salary of one city police officer. It's no wonder SummerHill has spent \$600,000, according to campaign records, to wage a misleading campaign to win the vote.

In addition, there are health and safety concerns with the cleanup plan for the contaminated soil. The plan is based on an environmental impact report that has been legally challenged. A "no" vote will give additional opportunities to ensure safe and eco-friendly methods for cleanup, such as bio-remediation.

Make no mistake, the state is responsible for cleaning up the land. If the measures fail and the state decides to use the land for other purposes, such as a Department of Motor Vehicles office, cleanup will still be required. It cannot expose state employees and the public to known contamination.

And here's a question: How can the state use the land if it already declared it surplus? Answer: It can't!

If this isn't confusing enough, the developer's campaign gloriously touts its plan as "Santa Clara Gardens." But don't be fooled: It is not a garden. It is a crowded subdivision with only 18 percent of the land used for senior housing. Not mentioned in most of the brochures are the 110 market-rate single-family homes that will take up 60 percent of this public land, leaving only one acre as a token park.

It reminds us of a cartoon that says: "Coming soon: The Pines subdivision. Going soon - the pines." It is more convenient if we believe it's a "garden" rather than telling the truth.

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The developers' campaign also implies that voting "no" somehow is a vote against the senior housing that would be part of the development. That is not true. If "no" on A and B wins, it actually means there's an opportunity for more senior housing. There are many alternative plans that could bring much more benefit to the citizens of Santa Clara, our children and our seniors. A "no" vote on A and B means we can come up with the best plan for us.

Imagine a public space in the center of Silicon Valley containing: An upscale open air market where you can buy organically, locally grown produce and other culinary ingredients similar to what you would find at the San Francisco Ferry Building; an organic farm to inspire us to do a better job with alternative ideas for health and nutrition; a gathering place for artisans; creative educational programs for children; a museum displaying our valley's agricultural history; new environmental ideas and jobs; a botanical garden with a flower market in the existing greenhouses; and green programs and technology we have yet to discover. Santa Clara would be legendary in its vision and forward-thinking approach to urban land use.

There are endless possibilities. But none of the above is possible unless you vote "no" on Measures A and B. Voting "no" gives us all a chance to shape the future of our community.

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