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NEWS

Open space activists plan to stop approved rezoning of BAREC site

By Mary Gottschalk

The Santa Clara City Council voted in the early hours of June 21 to rezone the 17-acre former University of California Bay Area Research and Extension Center from agriculture to planned development.

The vote clears the way for the state to sell the land to SummerHill Homes, which plans to build 110 single-family homes, and to the nonprofit Charities Housing to build up to 165 affordable senior housing units.

The property is on the west side of Winchester Boulevard, bordered by residences along Forest Avenue, Dorcich Street and Henry Avenue. It is across from Westfield Valley Fair and two blocks from Santana Row.

Opponents of development, calling themselves Save BAREC, have been working since UC ceased operations there in January 2003 to preserve the land as open space for use as a park and an urban educational farm.

They gained support from several San Jose City Council members, some Santa Clara County supervisors, the Sierra Club, the Preservation Action Council of San Jose, the Santa Clara County Historical Commission and others in their efforts to preserve BAREC as open space.

However, the final decision was up to the Santa Clara City Council because the site is within their city limits.

In 2005, Santa Clara Mayor Patricia Mahan said that while she philosophically supported open space, in the case of BAREC she supported development.

With more than 200 people in attendance at the June 20 city council meeting that went until 2:30 a.m., the city council agreed with Mahan.

However, the Save BAREC group is not giving up.

On its www.savebarec.org website it has announced the launch of a citywide referendum on the zoning change. Members are now seeking monetary donations and volunteers to gather signatures within the city of Santa Clara.

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