

# Santa Clara

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# WEEKLY



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# What's all the Controversy?

*Story on page 5*

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# BAREC Site of Controversy Half Century Ago

San Francisco Chronicle  
June 5, 1947 Page 3

## 43 Old Ladies Face Eviction By the State

*Special to The Chronicle*  
SAN JOSE, June 4—Forty men in Sacramento today were pondering a decision on which rests the fate of 43 old ladies, residents of the Women's Relief Corps Home near Santa Clara.

A bill to abolish the home by withdrawing State aid of \$1103 per inmate per year has passed the Assembly and now is before the 40-member Senate. Opponents argue the home—established in 1910 for widows, daughters and sisters of Civil War veterans—is no longer needed.

The 43 old ladies feel differently. "I'd rather die than leave," said Miss Eva Simpkins, the longest resident. She has called the place home since the year it opened. She became bed-ridden in 1910.

More voluble was Mrs. Nette Rowe, 75, who has lived at the home for 15 years.

"You know there aren't many places for old people to go and be really happy. We all had homes and families of our own once, but life has a way of taking those things away from people, so we came here. They just can't take it from us now."

In the event the Senate does, officials said 14 of the 43 would be sent to county hospitals in the districts from which they came; six would be taken to Agnew State Hospital—not because they are true mental cases but to get necessary care—and the remainder would be turned out with a pension of \$100 a month to shift for themselves.

San Francisco Chronicle  
June 12, 1947 Page 2

## Relief Home Closing Voted By Assembly

The State Assembly at Sacramento, by a poll of 54 to 20, yesterday voted to close the Santa Clara county Women's Relief Corps Home. Assemblyman Thompson of San Jose gave notice he would ask for reconsideration of the measure. It would disperse 43 widows and daughters of Civil War veterans now residing in the home and give them \$100 a month for subsistence elsewhere.

The Assembly action immediately stirred protests at San Jose.

Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon, who five years ago led a successful fight in the Legislature to prevent similar action, said:

"It would be a crime to close the home. It is well operated and well managed and the old ladies there are happy. It's the only home most of them have known for many years."

"The Assembly proposes to give the old ladies \$100 a month to fend for themselves. It would cost them \$150 to \$200 to live elsewhere."

families of veterans from the end of the Civil War into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When a WRC home in Evergreen burned in 1920, the residents were eventually moved into Osborne Hall — a former home for retarded and disabled children that used to be on the BAREC site. Appropriations by the State Senate and Assembly allowed the Women's Relief Corps to lease the building and provided financial support for the residents.

Controversy broke out in 1947 when the State Assembly voted 54 to 20 to close the home, allotting residents a pension of \$100 a month to "shift for themselves," according to the Chronicle story.

This vote "immediately stirred protests in San Jose," a June 12, 1947 Chronicle story reported.

Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon, who five years ago led a successful fight in the Legislature to prevent similar action, said:

Civil War veterans — is no longer needed.

An auxiliary of the Grand Army of the Republic, an association of Civil War vets, the WRC operated homes and hospitals for widows and

By Carolyn Schuk

Controversy is not a new feature on the landscape when it comes to the future of BAREC site on Winchester Blvd.

About 60 years ago, a local hullabaloo erupted about the future of the Women's Relief Corps (WRC) home that had been located on the land since 1920.

"43 Old Ladies Face Eviction By the State," screamed the headline on a June 5, 1947 San Francisco Chronicle story.

Forty men in Sacramento today were pondering a decision on which rests the fate of 43 old ladies, residents of the Women's Relief Corps Home near Santa Clara.

A bill to abolish the home by withdrawing State aid of \$1103 per inmate per year has passed the Assembly and is now before the 40-member Senate. Opponents argue the home — established in 1920 for daughters and sisters of



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Confession at 2:00 p.m.  
Holy Saturday, April 15, 7:00 p.m., Paschal Solemnity and Vigil Mass of Easter.  
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"It would be a crime to close the home. It is well operated and the old ladies there are happy. It's the only home many of them have known for many years."

"The Assembly proposed to give the old ladies \$100 a month to fend for themselves. It would cost them \$150 to \$200 to live elsewhere."

McKinnon was successful in his campaign and funding continued to the residents into the 1960s. The state subsequently leased the facility to Genevieve Charette, who renamed it Holderman Sanitarium and took on private patients.

By 1965, only one of the WRC residents remained on the state budget, "the only private citizen in California with an entire section of the state budget devoted to her," wrote Harry Farrell — the legendary San Jose reporter who

died last year — in the January 25, 1965 edition of the San Jose Evening News.

Miss [Eva] Simpkins is not mentioned by name in the budget, but nevertheless she constitutes an entire state agency, with an appropriation of \$3,900 for 1965-66...

Miss Simpkins, whose father fought in the Union forces, entered the home at Evergreen in 1911 with a paralytic condition now believed to have been polio...

A girl of 18 when she was stricken, she is now 71. She is bedridden, but enjoys television and has lots of visitors.

Simpkins died in 1966.

Between 1962 and 1963, the residents were moved and the Holderman Sanitarium building was demolished. The property was transferred to the University of California — paving the way for today's controversy.

See BAREC Q&A page 11

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## BAREC Q&A

By Carolyn Schuk

With a series of public meetings on the agenda for the next four months, the disposition of BAREC - the former UC research station located in Santa Clara - promises to be a hot local issue for some time to come.

The City of Santa Clara is putting forward its "Santa Clara Gardens" plan for developing the site with a combination of low income senior housing, market rate housing and a public park. The plan was approved by the City Council in November 2002.

Opponents of development continue their fight to keep the site undeveloped.

The picture is far from simple. In the interest of fostering the civic conversation about the issue, we offer the following BAREC crib sheet.

Let's start at the beginning.

**What is BAREC?** The 17 acre Bay Area Research and Extension Center on Winchester Blvd. (across from Valley Fair) was a University of California agricultural research station from 1928 until it was closed in 2003 and the state put the land up for sale.

The primary research at BAREC focused on improving crop production methods, irrigation, and plant nutrition, variety, and disease control. Currently there is no activity on the site.

**Why was BAREC closed?** When UC decommissioned the agricultural station in 2003, the reason given was that the usefulness of the site had decreased because the area was no longer primarily agricultural.

Some say that the station was closed as a result of "backroom deals" in 1999 when UC officials "traded BAREC for a \$2 million annual funding increase" for the financially strapped UC Cooperative Extension, according to a story in the October 19, 2005 edition of the San Jose Metro.

**Who owns it?** Although BAREC is within Santa Clara city limits, the property is owned by the state of California and considered surplus land.

**Why is the state selling the land?** The state determined that no other state agency had a need for it and put the land - valued at \$2 to \$4 million an acre - on the market. Proceeds from this sale will go to the state's general fund.

**What control does the city of Santa Clara have over the site?** The Santa Clara City controls the zoning of the land. Currently the land is zoned agricultural. The City Council has to approve zoning changes required for development. The City is designated the lead agency for the proposed Santa Clara Gardens project, with primary authority for approval.

**What's the proposed Santa Clara**

**Gardens project?** The City of Santa Clara has entered into an agreement to buy six acres of BAREC at below market price through its Redevelopment Agency Affordable Housing Fund. One acre of the property will be set aside for a public park.

Two non-profits - Charities Housing and the Santa Clara Methodist Foundation - are partnering with the city to build about 165 apartments for low income and very low-income seniors - defined as single seniors with incomes below \$59,400 and \$37,150 respectively.

The remaining 10 acres will be sold to Summerhill Homes. (Summerhill chairman George Marcus is also, incidentally, a UC Regent.) The developer is proposing to build 110 single-family homes.

**What are the arguments against development?** Opponents of development believe that the site affords a valuable view into the pre-technology history of the Santa Clara Valley. They feel that in the crowded Bay Area, the site has intrinsic value as open space.

Proponents of continuing the site's use as an agricultural research center say that it can be valuable for research in biotechnology and "urban agriculture"

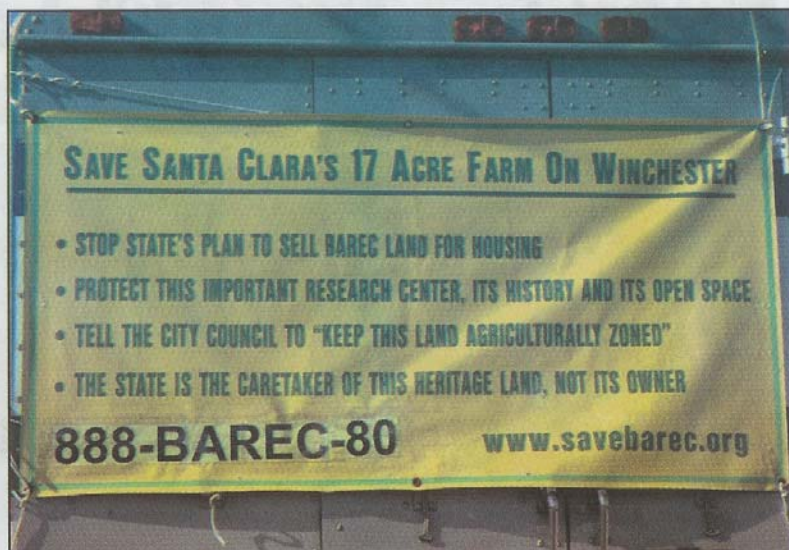
Finally, neighborhood groups are concerned about the impacts of noise and increased traffic congestion as well as increased demands on city infrastructure.

**Why isn't the city buying the entire site?** Quite simply, the city can't afford it. Santa Clara is currently running a deficit, and deficits are forecast for the next several years. The city was able to purchase the six acres because California has a long-standing practice of selling state-owned land at below market rates for affordable housing. Otherwise the State must sell surplus property at fair market value.

San Jose, which also borders BAREC, likewise can't afford to buy the property. And no non-profit has stepped forward with the funds to buy it at market value.

**Isn't the site an historic site?** Although the site has had different uses during its history, it has not been designated a federal or state historic site. The draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) published March 9, 2006, finds that the site doesn't meet the criteria for a national or state historic landmark, a California point of historical interest, or a historic landscape. The historical value of the site is currently under discussion by the Historical and Landmarks Commission.

**What about the ecology of the site?** Because the entire site was farmed, there are no native plant communities, according to the draft EIR. Wildlife diversity is "low" according to the report, and no protected or endangered - "special status" - species were



observed on the property.

Dr. Rachel O'Malley, chair of the department of Environmental Studies at SJSU is currently using BAREC as a case study for one of her classes in assessing environmental impact.

Some have expressed concern that development interests are driving the environmental impact evaluation. This is the view of the anti-development group Save BAREC.

**What about toxic substances in the soil?** Part of the site's research work also involved demonstrating the effectiveness of pesticides - which resulted in unacceptable levels of arsenic and dieldrin (a pesticide used from the 1950s to the 1970s). These contaminants must be removed before any development takes place. State funding is available for this clean-up if the site is built by a private developer.

**What has to happen before BAREC is developed?** Development is by no means a given at this time. A 45-day public comment period for the EIR ends on April 24. The Parks & Recreation, the Senior Advisory, and the Historical & Landmarks commissions must also review the project.

After that, the City Council has to accept the EIR, approve the zoning changes and sign the development agreement.

**What if the city refuses to re-zone the property?** The State could ask for another private use proposal, put the property to another State use - including building any type of state-run facility - without regard to local zoning or city government approval, or even initiate legal action against the City for thwarting development.

For more information about BAREC, visit the city's website at [www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us](http://www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us). Background is available at [www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us/city\\_gov/city\\_gov\\_90nwinchester\\_barec\\_update.html](http://www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us/city_gov/city_gov_90nwinchester_barec_update.html).

The Environmental Impact Report is available online at [www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us/city\\_gov/city\\_gov\\_90nwinchester\\_barec\\_draft\\_eir.html](http://www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us/city_gov/city_gov_90nwinchester_barec_draft_eir.html). Printed copies are available at the Central Library and the Santa Clara Planning De-

partment.

For the anti-development viewpoint, visit [www.savebarec.org](http://www.savebarec.org).

Carolyn Schuk can be reached at [cschuk@earthlink.net](mailto:cschuk@earthlink.net).

### Currently Scheduled Public Meetings About BAREC

**Thursday, April 13, 7:00 p.m.**

Westwood Elementary School, 435 Saratoga Ave

Purpose: Public Comment on draft [toxics] Removal Action Workplan (RAW)

**Tuesday, April 18, 7:00 p.m.**

**Parks and Recreation Commission**  
City Council Chambers, 1500 Warburton Avenue

Purpose: Review of Proposed 1-acre Park and Project Overview

**Monday, April 24, 10:00 a.m.**

**Senior Advisory Commission**  
Community Recreation Center, 969 Kiely Boulevard

Purpose: Review and Comment on Proposed Affordable Senior Housing Development

**The following meetings are subject to change**

**Wednesday, June 28 7:00 p.m.**

**Planning Commission (Regular Meeting)**  
City Council Chambers, 1500 Warburton Avenue

Purpose: Public Hearing and Recommendations to City Council on Proposed Development Applications (Senior Housing, Single Family Homes, and 1-acre Park)

**Tuesday, July 18 2006 7:00 p.m.**

**City Council (Regular Meeting)**  
City Council Chambers, 1500 Warburton Avenue