

Bulldozing Low-Cost Housing in Beach Flats

Santa Cruz plans demolition and evictions to expand the Boardwalk

by Becky Johnson

The seaside city of Santa Cruz beckons to tourists by offering fun in the sun on the beach, roller coaster rides, and arcade games to amuse and entertain. Next to the nearly 100-year-old amusement park is the Beach Flats neighborhood, where 344 homes sit in the shadow of the Seaside Company, which owns and manages the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

The Seaside Company, a major economic power in Santa Cruz, is planning an ambitious expansion that will severely encroach on the homes of the Beach Flats neighborhood. Many of these homes belong to working-class families or lower-income residents. The neighborhood is said to have the highest density population in Santa Cruz, and the highest percentage of Latinos in residence.

For the last six years, the word on the street has been to get ready for the bulldozers. The whole beach area is set to be "redeveloped." Santa Cruz, like cities across the nation, has chosen to spend millions in public funds to upgrade business and residential areas to "fight blight" and "ensure prosperity." Currently in the planning stages, and with \$500,000 already spent on consultants (some say the number is actually three times that high), the Beach area/South of Laurel (B/SOL)



Children play in the yard of their Beach Flats home, now targeted for demolition. Many poor and working families are threatened with eviction. Jane Baer photo

plan is now being pushed before the Santa Cruz City Council to adopt.

\$8.4 MILLION TO CITY'S RICHEST MAN

Phase 1A of the Beach Area Redevelopment plan calls for the realignment of 3rd Street in Santa Cruz, initially displacing 23 housed families. It will cost an estimated \$3.4 million of public funds

to purchase property rights, demolish homes, and build basic infrastructure such as sewers, water, street lights, sidewalks and streets. It would not provide any replacement housing.

The sole purpose of the realignment project is to allow the Boardwalk to