

expand, adding a 125-foot roller coaster at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River and mowing down some of the best housing stock in the Beach Flats in the process.

An additional \$5 million has been proposed to renovate and expand the La Bahia hotel, owned by the Seaside Company, from 42 rooms to a 275-room hotel and conference center. The recipient of this fat giveaway is Charles Canfield, CEO and majority stockholder of the Seaside Company, and Santa Cruz's richest resident.

"It's a swindle and a giveaway," charges Phil Baer, longtime Beach Flats landlord and resident (a rare combo in the Beach Flats), and member of the Beach Flats Neighborhood Association (BFNA). Since Beach Flats has the last truly affordable housing in the city, activists are preparing to fight for replacement housing, and to monitor illegal evictions by landlords trying to avoid payment of large relocation costs.

City officials have made plenty of promises but no guarantees of replacement housing for the 162 units of housing which will be lost when all phases of the plan are enacted. Similarly, there are no guarantees of revenue from the hoped-for increased tourist traffic.

The one housing project currently being considered by Mercy Charities, a 28-unit proposal, lacks sufficient financing to proceed. If built, it will have such a narrow criteria for occupancy that no one due to be displaced by the first phase of development will qualify for residency there.

"The Mello Act is not being adhered to," charged Beach Flats resident Roxanne Acquistapace. "This act requires the replacement housing to be of equal value to the housing vacated. So an apartment would not be an acceptable replacement for a single family home."

No currently housed renter or homeowner living in a single-family residential home would choose to trade a house and a yard for a tiny apartment in a housing project, even if they qualify. The targeted homes, built between 1904 and 1920, include seven historic homes, and would all be demolished to expand the Boardwalk.

The neighborhood would be reduced by one-third, and the resident density would actually increase under the plan. This is especially ironic because one of the reasons given for the need to "do something" in Beach Flats neighborhood is to relieve overcrowding.

SLUM HOUSING OR SLICK RHETORIC ?

Claims of substandard or below-code housing units in Beach Flats appear to be myths. Santa Cruz City Councilmember Mike Rotkin called the Beach Flats housing "a slum" and "an eyesore," infuriating residents who have experienced the

neglect of city officials for over 10 years in maintaining the streets or fixing inadequate storm drains.

Acquistapace refutes Rotkin's claim that the housing is substandard. "For the past two years our neighborhood has been scrutinized by city code inspectors with clipboards walking our streets all day and every day looking for violations to cite," Acquistapace reports. "No other neighborhood in the city has had to put up with such scrutiny. There are no substandard units of housing in Beach Flats." All 344 units of housing in the Beach Flats neighborhood have been inspected inside and out in the last six years.

Frustrated with efforts to empty housing units through existing code violations quickly enough to make way for the commercial development, the Planning Commission, at its May 12th session, explored asking the City Council to write an ordinance making standards in the Beach Flats neighborhood more stringent than the State or Federal Housing and Safety Codes. The commissioners discussed talking to judges ahead of time to encourage them to strictly enforce the Beach Flats' cases and "educating" sympathetic magistrates to rule on these cases, in order to guarantee a favorable judgment.

Local residents opposing the Seaside scheme for their neighborhood have reported being pressured by Santa Cruz City Councilmembers.

"(Councilmembers) Kennedy, Rotkin, and Hernandez have been following our members around as they have been going door to door with our literature," said Beach Flats resident Acquistapace. "They have been acting in a very intimidating manner." BFNA members reported that police officers knocked on area residents' doors demanding to know if they had received any literature from opponents of the redevelopment plan.

Even former Mayor Jane Yokoyama, at the first large predominantly Spanish-language meeting in Beach Flats on August 19, told the group that those three councilmembers had been lying when they said they had gone door to door and most of the Beach Flats residents were in favor of the plan. "No es verdad," she told the group.

CANFIELD — THE SPECULATOR

Over the past six years, Charles Canfield has been buying up housing in the Beach area. Many contend the Canfield properties are among the worst maintained. "Engineered blight!" charges Phil Baer, noting that it allows Canfield to buy up properties at depressed values. Canfield admitted he could raise the rents without making any improvements with impunity.

This tactic has resulted in families leaving the Beach Flats because of the ever-increasing rents, leaving the units vacant

and relieving Canfield from having to pay costly relocation costs. A unit left empty for two years relieves the obligation for the developer to replace the unit.

In 1997, records show that Canfield had bought or owned 54 parcels in the Beach Flats. Many have already been bulldozed. The Beach Flats Neighborhood Association reports that 25 to 30 Canfield properties stand vacant today, including one unit standing empty and boarded up since the 1989 earthquake. In a neighborhood reported to have the highest percentage of Latinos in the city, this has already resulted in the dislocation of 200-300 mostly poor or low-income people.

LOUSY PAY FOR SEASIDE WORKERS

The final irony: Seaside Company employees don't earn enough to pay for Seaside Company housing. According to a Santa Cruz Homeowners & Residents Committee report, of the 975 current Seaside Company employees, only 75 work year round. Starting wages are \$6.15 per hour with no benefits. Expected jobs from the B/SOL Plan are those of amusement park ride operators, wait persons, hotel maids, and retail clerks — none of which will be living wage positions.

The Seaside Company has a reputation for running homeless people off the Santa Cruz Boardwalk through the use of very aggressive security guards. Homeless United for Friendship and Freedom (HUFF) has received several complaints of unnecessary force, discriminatory evictions, and property seizures from the amusement park, which is advertised as having free admission.

On August 5, the Planning Commission ignored overwhelming opposition from Beach Flats residents to approve the redevelopment plan, with a few minor modifications from Commissioner Rod Quartararo, a right-wing City Council candidate voting for the plan. In addition to Linda Steinau and Quartararo, candidate Jane Walton also favors the plan. She described the housing units in the path of the 3rd Street realignment as "rat holes," but admitted she didn't know of a single unit of occupied below-code housing.

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