

OPINIONS *Ours ... yours ... others*

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EDITORIALS

Area approach to open space

Will the hills above the Midpeninsula be open or occupied?

Or will there be a rational mix based on sound planning principles and land use economics?

These critical questions are now in the process of being studied and answered—to a large extent—by a two-year, \$144,000 "environmental design study" for the Palo Alto hills area.

That area just happens to lie in the heart of a broader Peninsula backbone stretch of ridge and hill land, future directions of which may likely be decided in coming months.

Both developers and conservationists are watching the outcome of the Palo Alto study, and some are working in their own ways to influence it.

But meanwhile, there is a variety of forces at work independent of the study that could influence the hills' destiny at least as much as the study itself.

In Palo Alto, there is a 530-acre, high density lower foothills development proposal working its way through city policy levels amid increasing doubts (from a variety of observers) that it will emerge looking much like the way it went in.

In the upper hills, a group of property owners is trying to put together a "conservation-minded" investor group to combine preservation of open space with development where it will do the least ecological and esthetic damage.

Farther north, however, the open ridge is being threatened by housing and logging interests which San Mateo County officials have been unwilling or unable (or both) to control.

Conservationists, such as those in the Committee for Green Foothills, seem to

be in danger of falling into the old conservationist trap of fighting rear-guard battles (such as the legal entanglement it is now in relating to Stanford's Coyote Hill), or of concentrating on lobbying-type activity among local officials.

Some look hopefully to higher governmental levels for aid in saving the open spaces. Others are groping for new approaches to restrictive land zoning to discourage land development.

Meanwhile, hills landowners (many of whom are highly sympathetic to conservation goals) are being taxed to the edge of the canyon, so to speak.

If the conservationists and others who value the view from the flatlands are really serious, they should take this time to examine their ultimate priority—undeveloped open space—and move to set up an agency capable of being a recipient for land, either donated, willed or purchased through whatever local state or federal funds may be available.

This worked in the East Bay. Why not the west?

Voter deadline

The first 1970 voter registration deadline falls on Thursday, Feb. 19. It's the last day for potential voters in the Midpeninsula's April 14 city council elections to sign up.

Young people newly of age, new citizens, persons with new addresses or new names, those who were purged from election lists for not voting in 1968 or who for lack of interest never have registered—all these people should take this first step toward exercising their right to vote.