

Proponents campaign for new stadium

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EAST PALTO ALTO — The campaign to convince this city that it needs the San Francisco Giants stadium is under way.

The City Council agreed Monday to form a citizens task force to address opposition to the proposal.

"We would like to work with this community to gain your support," said Brian Swartz, chairman of the San Mateo County Stadium Task Force.

Now that state and county officials have given their blessing to the proposal to build a \$100 million ballpark, work begins on convincing those most affected by the plan — the residents.

A petition is being circulated by residents opposed to the traffic a 45,000-seat stadium might create.

The industrial property owners that would be relocated from the 200-acre site also are expressing reservations about the ambitious plans.

Some have said East Palo Alto doesn't need a stadium to succeed; it's reportedly ripe for redevelopment all on its own.

An East Palo Alto "public awareness program" is being undertaken to counteract the negative feelings.

Forming the 15-member citizens task force is the first component of that program.

A citywide mailing to promote the stadium also may be made, in addition to holding meetings with those most opposed.

Council members urged residents to take a wait-and-see attitude about the plans.

Councilman John Bostic, an ardent stadium supporter, said it's

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time for this city to use some positive thinking.

"If we start being for something instead of against we just might make it," he said.

A handful of speakers expressed reservations about committing the city to the stadium.

They worried about its impact on the nearby homes, the close proximity to the Palo Alto Airport, and a decline in property values.

"What are we, the city of East Palo Alto, going to get for the citizens?" asked Myrtle Walker.

Hunters Point in San Francisco, the neighborhood surrounding Candlestick Park, has suffered, not prospered, because of the stadium, she said.

Several council members said they shared those concerns, but that doesn't mean the proposal should be dropped.

Councilman Warnell Coats said the city is floundering with only a \$4.8 million budget.

A stadium study the council authorized two weeks ago will begin to tell East Palo Alto what's best for it, he said.

"We don't need the San Mateo County Development Association to plan us out of business," he said.

Councilman Ruben Abrica said it's ironic that East Palo Alto couldn't get noticed before by developers.

"Now we're worried about too much development," he said.

Tentative plans show the southeastern corner of the city being cleared of its junkyards and other businesses, using the city's redevelopment powers of eminent domain.

In its place would rise an open-air ballpark, surrounded by commercial development that could include a restaurant row, auto mall, business park and hotel complex.

Cooley's Landing, a private boat-storage yard, could be taken over for a deluxe marina and hovercraft landing site.

Land-use consultant Steve Brothers, who is working on the stadium plan, said "one of the top three retailers" in the United States is interested in building a shopping center adjacent to the stadium.

Giants owner Bob Lurie has given San Mateo and Santa Clara

counties until the end of this year to find a new home for the team.

The lease at Candlestick Park expires in 1994.

He's looking for a new town with better weather, improved traffic access and strong community support.

Coats told his colleagues to take their time deciding if East Palo Alto wants the Giants.

"We have some of the most valuable land in the Bay Area. We're in the position to pick and chose," he said.