

East Palo Alto three-year plan aimed at improving economic base

"We have, quite frankly, developed a program here that is designed to get the bread and butter," George Gatter, a special consultant to the East Palo Alto Municipal Council, said at a public hearing Monday night.

Gatter has engineered a three-year plan which will use federal funds to redevelop the Nairobi Shopping Center, improve streets, spur housing construction and rehabilitation, and encourage industrial growth.

The public hearing was the Municipal Council's first and last on the subject of how to spend the first year's allocation of federal Community Development Act funds.

The East Palo Alto application could bring the community \$1,241,000 for each of three successive years and a lesser amount in the final two years of a five-year program.

The East Palo Alto application now goes to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the Association

of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), and finally to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). If approved, the program could be in operation by mid-summer.

"We tried to put everything in there that's beneficial to the community," Mrs. Gertrude Wilks, a councilwoman, told an audience of about 40 persons Monday night.

One of the immediate problems is that HUD will not allow the expenditure of

any of the funds in an area designated as flood-prone or within a 100-year flood plain.

For the time being, that restricts most of the planning to a corridor including University Avenue and a few blocks to either side.

Meanwhile, the council considers remodeling the Nairobi Shopping Center at University Avenue and Bay Road its top priority in an effort to keep an estimated \$14 million in purchasing power annually inside the community.

At present, almost all purchases of groceries and similar commodities are made in neighboring cities because of the absence of stores in East Palo Alto.

Municipal Council Chairman Henry Anthony promised to stop the "rip-offs," both in a remodeled shopping center and in any industrial development in the community.

Councilman Clarence W. Burley added, "No matter how many policemen we have, it's not going to stop until we do something about it ... it's got to be an in-house thing."

Mrs. Wilks agreed. "In building the shopping center we'll also have to do some building in the community," she said, emphasizing that the social atmosphere will have to change.

Gatter's plans also seek industrial growth.

At first that growth will be encouraged in an area along Bay Road between University Avenue and Pulgas Avenue. East Palo Alto will share the cost of widening that part of Bay Road, hoping to make way for more truck traffic. The county and state also will help pay for the widening.

Gatter's plan also calls for rehabilitating about 40 houses a year; encouraging new housing starts; and constructing a senior citizens housing project.

Gatter said the aim of the program is to raise the economic standards of the community, creating new jobs, creating a strong tax base and improving the quality of life in East Palo Alto.