

REINVENTING SILICON VALLEY...  
BIOTECHNOLOGY AND SAVING OUR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER  
By Kathryn Jane Mathewson

Two significant events are taking place concurrently that will harm Silicon Valley forever. If we act quickly these changes can be reversed. Because of our State deficit, in early February our 82-year-old 17 acre UC Agricultural Research Center in Santa Clara County will be sold. Our Center was selected because our land values are higher than the other nine rural centers. The money from the sale will not return to our community but will pay for short-term political mistakes. We will lose federal and state money, six researchers, buildings with a center for public education, on-going urban research, a weather station. These benefits will not return. The second event is unfolding more slowly. Even with an upswing in the economy, the Valley will never be the same. Why? Little silicon valleys are surfacing worldwide. To compete globally, the Valley needs to reinvent itself. These two events are related but neither the agriculture/horticulture nor the technology communities understand how they can benefit each other.

Biotechnology, the revolution for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, needs a new definition. Biotech includes not only gene and cell manipulation to cure a small percentage of our population with diseases. It should also include the study microorganisms that can clean up our environment and also create better soil for healthier food without chemicals and fertilizers. It should weave biology and technology together and help us understand how to live with nature harmoniously and with less expense than we currently are doing. Ecology, the science of the inter-relationships of life, is vital to this work. Such research and education is more positive than the existing Biotech research and can prevent disease thus keep the majority of our citizens healthy.

The way the Valley is being built demonstrates our lack of ecological awareness. For example, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, which has the largest budget in the state and one of the largest budgets in the country, is building parks along the Guadalupe River that have no native plants, reflect the style of different famous designers, and have no continuity. Their projects include expensive imported stone, no sustainability, and no sense of our local heritage. The Valley's new housing developments are birdless with no native plants and plants which will be too large for their small planting beds. Also, our newly planted palm "theme tree" does not grow well in our cold climate and, therefore, continuously has dead fronds. Two of our largest parks, Guadalupe and Prusch, are dominated by airplane and freeway sounds. At least three times our Valley land was willed to our governments for agriculture/horticulture purposes and was sold for other governmental expenses.

Agriculture has reinvented itself. Environmental horticulture, urban ecology, urban horticulture, urban forestry, organic gardening, and ecological farming are major trends in today's agriculture research. Each agriculture center focuses on its unique ecology and community. Without our Center, our needs will not be met by the rural centers and two coastal centers, Mendocino and Ventura.

Silicon Valley's continuing economic and technological leadership depends on our ability to weave biology and technology together. The Center is an intimate part of our future and can

result in new jobs and better health. Its 30 million dollar sale will be a small dent in our 35 billion dollar deficit. Governor Davis is the only person who can stop the land's execution. Write him immediately at State Capitol Building, First Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 or [governor@governor.ca.gov](mailto:governor@governor.ca.gov). Visit [www.secretgardens.com](http://www.secretgardens.com) for details or ideas of what to include in your letter.

**Note: The City of Santa Clara is holding a hearing about the Center's future on Jan. 15, 7-9 p.m., 390 N. Winchester Blvd., Bldg. 18.**