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Title: LAND EARMARKED AS MEMORIAL FINALLY WILL BE DEVELOPED

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There was talk some years back of naming the new Highway 101 bypass between South San Jose and Morgan Hill after one of its chief champions, a man whose death on the old Monterey Highway's so-called "Blood Alley" prompted officials to finally approve the bypass.

Gary Albertson's name instead was given to a park. At least, it was supposed to be a park.

But more than a decade after Albertson's death on Dec. 15, 1974, the Gary Albertson Parkway in the Santa Teresa area remains an undeveloped stretch of dirt and weeds shadowed by the towers and wires of Pacific Gas & Electric Co. The land, about 80 feet wide and nearly a mile long, eventually is intended to be a park for joggers and walkers and may ultimately include a community garden.

"Here it is, Dec. 15, 1986, and the guy still hasn't been appropriately memorialized," said David Fadness, an Edenvale community activist. "All he's got is this eyesore named after him. It doesn't fit what he worked for."

Fadness said he never met Albertson, but was among the chief proponents of naming the Highway 101 bypass for the community advocate who had fought to have it built. The Blood Alley accident killed Albertson, then 38, his wife Doris and their 12-year-old daughter as they headed home after cutting down a Christmas tree.

City officials say a \$55,000 state grant finally will allow them to build a paved path through the Albertson Parkway, intended for use by joggers and pedestrians including children walking to school. It is hoped that the path will cut out use of the land as a place to dump garbage and as a motorcycling strip. Eventually, there may be a community garden on the north end of the parkway by Santa Teresa Elementary School.

Councilwoman Judy Stabile, whose district includes the parkway, emphasized last week that no such plan would be approved without consent of the neighborhood.

Meanwhile, the paved path -- without landscaping -- is the only part of the project that is funded.

When the parkway was named, then-Councilman Joe Colla voted against the move and called it a "cop-out" because "the easement is not a park."

But other officials argued the naming was appropriate because it was in Albertson's old neighborhood and, then-Councilman Jim Self said, it could someday be "one of the exceptional parks in the area."

Stabile last week said "that someday has not arrived yet. . . . I think we're basically trying to make lemonade here."

She said the PG&E wires overhead make virtually impossible development of a park in the traditional sense that would include activities like ball games.

"You aim to serve some need in the community with the resources that we have," Stabile said. The District 2 parks budget has been strapped for several years, she said, so "I'm trying to use other kinds of city park uses, like community gardens, that are funded differently to make that a place that has people in it."

One neighbor of the parkway said that residents approved the pathway in a vote, but that a community garden would need further discussion.

"For people that need vegetables and need food, that part is very worthwhile," said the woman, who asked not to be identified for fear of retribution by vandals who already have damaged her property because of her outspokenness about the parkway.

"But it would have to be properly patrolled," she added.

"It's really been a garbage dump for years," said the woman, who has lived in the neighborhood since 1972. "And we've had people zooming through here with trucks and cars . . . motorcycles."

The pathway design will include new barricades to keep the vehicles out. The neighbor said she would like to see "grass, a tree or two, a couple of rocks."

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