

Breakthrough

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Homes may threaten Indian graves

Sebastopol's Palm Terrace hits new snag

By CLARK MASON
Staff Writer

SEBASTOPOL — Standing next to a barbed wire fence separating him from land he roamed as a child, 89-year-old Grant Smith explained why he believes Indian graves are on the other side of the fence where developers plan to build homes.

The developers, who are willing to pay for additional archaeological work if necessary, point out that extensive reviews were done on the property and no evidence of any

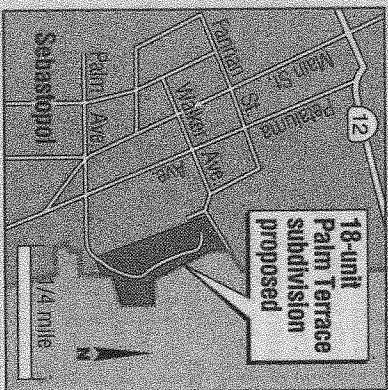
ancient burial grounds was found.

But Smith, who is part Pomo and part Miwok, said there was a large Indian settlement close to the fenced land where the 18-home Palm Terrace subdivision is planned.

"Where we live, we bury our people," he said, adding Palm Terrace is on "upland" next to the Laguna de Santa Rosa — a natural choice for a burial ground for the nearby village, since it remains dry in winter when the Laguna floods.

"There's bodies all along here," he said, looking at the gently sloping land that was once a rich source of game and acorns for his people.

What makes Smith uneasy about how Indian remains might be treated is that he has been barred from the Palm Terrace property by owner George Young, who owns



18-unit Palm Terrace subdivision proposed

the three-acre site along with Yolanda Ghilotti.

Smith was kicked off Palm Terrace last year when he brought a group of relatives to the property. "They told us we were trespassers," Smith said. "They talked to us

like a bunch of animals. They had no respect at all."

Young, a Sebastopol contractor, refused requests to allow Smith to go onto the Palm Terrace site. "It's private property," he said.

Young's attorney, Steve Butler, said the property owners are not willing to allow "anyone else" on the property at this time.

"There was a full-scale archaeological review conducted as part of the previously certified EIR (environmental impact report)," Butler said. "Neither the city nor my clients have any reason to believe burial sites exist on the property.

"I don't think my client wants to be obstructionist," Butler said, adding the previous survey turned up no evidence of graves and Smith was there when the work was done.

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A fence marks the land where Grant Smith believes there are graves.

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