

LOCAL & STATE

Demolition of Fairchild building begins in S.J.

Community bids plant good riddance

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Residents of a South San Jose community watched Saturday as huge holes were gouged into the walls of the former Fairchild semiconductor manufacturing plant on Bernal Road — a first step in demolishing the notorious eyesore and erasing painful memories.

The 22-acre site, which is on the federal Superfund cleanup list and was the subject of a multimillion-dollar settlement in the 1980s over groundwater contamination that allegedly caused birth defects, is being redeveloped at a cost of more than \$20 million. Developers plan to build the San Ignacio Shopping Center on the site, which will include a 65,000-square-foot Lucky/Sav-On store and other retailers aimed at serving neighborhood shoppers.

San Jose City Council member Charlotte Powers said once the Fairchild building is demolished, residents will no longer have "to



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endure the constant reminder of pain and heartache" of the site's troubled history.

"We're here to bury the past and celebrate the future," Powers said. "It's been a goal of mine to see this albatross go. Let's get on

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Fairchild site still on Superfund list

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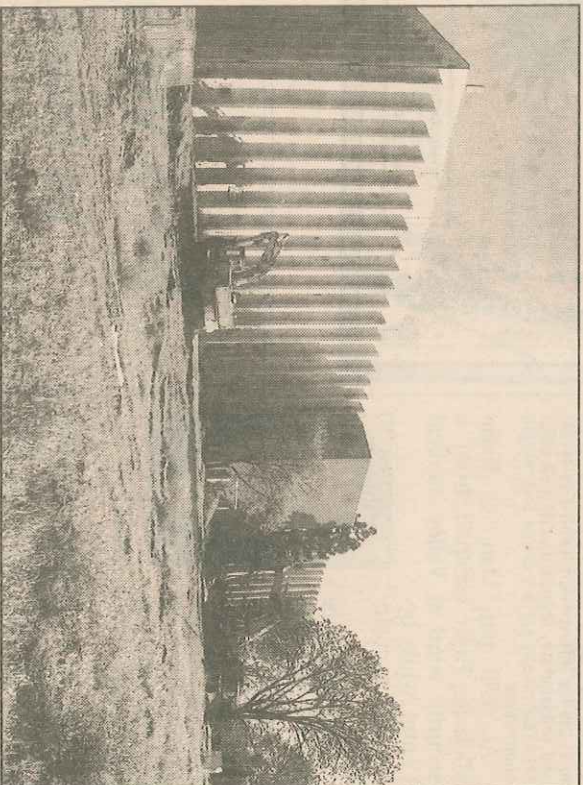
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with it and get this building down."

The massive concrete Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp. building has been vacant for more than 15 years. In 1981, workers discovered that toxic chemicals were leaking from underground storage tanks and contaminating groundwater. It became the first toxic site linked to the high-tech industry, which until then had been thought to be a "clean" manufacturing process.

The incident led to environmental laws aimed at keeping drinking water safe, which are now applied to virtually every semiconductor fabrication plant around the country.

A 1985 state health department study indicated a higher-than-normal incidence of birth defects and miscarriages in Santa Teresa-area neighborhoods from 1977 to 1983. No conclusive link between the birth defects and the water contamination was established, but some 500 residents sued Fairchild and others and won a multi-million-dollar settlement in 1986. The site remains on the Envi-



ANNA MARIE DOS REMEDIOS — MERCURY NEWS

Demolition of the former Fairchild semiconductor manufacturing plant in South San Jose will proceed full-throttle this week.

ronmental Protection Agency's Superfund list, and more than \$100 million has been spent thus far to clean up the contamination. Water and environmental experts insist the site is now safe.

Ray Ferrari, owner of Ferrari Development, said groundbreak-

ing for the shopping center is set for April and construction should be completed by November.

Ferrari decided to make Saturday's event a community gathering. Neighbors were invited for a barbecue and to get a glimpse of the demolition, which will pro-

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—*Charlotte Powers,*
San Jose City Council member

ceed full-throttle this week.

“The neighborhood had a lot of input, from the aesthetics to landscaping and the type of stores. Without their support this would never have happened,” Ferrari said.

Ferrari said the new center will generate around 650 jobs, many of which he would like to see filled by area residents.

And there were no tears from residents as parts of the building crumbled.

“We came over to see them start tearing it down,” Robert Taitano, a 36-year-old computer technician who showed up with his 9-year-old son, Ian.