

the property. To get voters to approve the land purchase, Palo Alto's council pledged that the park would exclude non-Palo Altans, a policy that has been enforced with rigor for more than 30 years.

"I don't feel wedded to that promise," says Councilmember Ron Andersen, a popular and charismatic history teacher at Palo Alto High School who surprised many by winning his first race for local office. Andersen prompted a flood of angry protest last November when he suggested that Palo Alto consider adopting an open admissions policy for Foothill Park. "Most of our tax dollars come from people who work in Palo Alto but don't live here," Andersen explains, maintaining that 30 years of exclusive use has more than compensated Palo Altans for their original investment in the property.

"This issue really brings out the best and worst of Palo Altans," notes Andersen, who says he was disappointed and surprised by the hostility and thinly veiled racism his effort touched off. "There were people complaining about having too many of 'those people' in our other parks," Andersen recalls of the recent council meeting where his motion to explore opening the park failed on a surprisingly close 5-4 vote. "I really don't feel comments like that represent the feelings of a majority of Palo Altans," he says bravely, although his supporters at the meeting were as numerous as nuns in a casino.

Critics of the current admissions policy point to the dwindling numbers of park visitors in recent