

✓ River panel criticizes auto plaza report ^{S.C.}

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SANTA CRUZ — The River Restoration Committee Wednesday termed "inadequate" an environmental-impact report examining the impact of a proposed auto center on the proposed restoration of the San Lorenzo River.

"I don't think there is an absolute conflict between the river project (and the auto center)," committee Chairman Bruce Van Allen said. But he added that the committee was hindered by "phantom facts" when it came to the auto center proposal.

Auto dealer Steve Bergstrom and the city of Santa Cruz are discussing a proposal for as many as 10 auto dealerships on land in a redevelopment area bounded by the river, River Street and Highway 1.

"No one has withheld information in a malicious sense," Van Allen said, "but this is a deal that isn't made yet. There is nothing hard about the figures. ... Most of the so-called information is speculation."

Committee members said the environmental-impact report fails to assess adequately the potential for the toxic runoff of grease, oil and solvents produced by the center, the effect of bright lighting and noise on wildlife, and the impact on plants, let alone the aesthetic considerations.

In a letter to advise the City Council on the report, the city advisory committee said that because of the auto center's proximity to the river, it should be coordinated with the river plan.

One example cited by committee members is for a proposed 16-foot security fence around the auto center.

"Requirements for security and other signing considerations appear to be incompatible with the river-restoration goals," Van Allen said.

The committee also criticized the impact report for not considering alternate locations for an auto center.

One committee member even suggested that the city's greenbelts should be considered as an auto plaza site.

"Our task is to speak for the river project, and that is what we are doing," Van Allen said.