

Watsonville Square plans an even larger expansion

By LANE WALLACE

The developers of Watsonville Square, who already have approval for a 20,000-square-foot addition next year, have asked the city to boost that approval to 35,000 square feet.

Doug Kaplan, one of the partners in Watsonville Square Associates, a Capitola firm, said the expansion will include stores, but no major ones; a restaurant and theater are possibilities.

The expansion will be the second for Watsonville Square, which opened at Green Valley Road and Main Street in the fall of 1982 with 87,000 square feet of shop space.

The first expansion will take place later this spring when a 4,000-square-foot restaurant and 5,000 square feet of shop space are built, in two free-standing buildings at the front of the center.

Next year's expansion will require a General Plan change and rezoning, for which the developers have submitted an environmental impact report to the city.

The EIR will be reviewed by

the city Planning Commission June 4. If the commission deems the report complete, it will consider the General Plan change and rezoning, then send its recommendations to the City Council for final consideration.

The 1985 expansion will be built on the south of the center. The original plan had been for a Portuguese Hall to be built there, but those plans fell through.

The developers are asking to change the designation on 2.16 acres — 1.28 acres from "public building" to "neighborhood shopping center" and .88 acres from "open space" to "neighborhood shopping center."

Candida Neal, an associate planner for the city, said the planning staff "will probably support the project," although some conditions may be required.

Kaplan said that he is investigating the possibilities of a theater and restaurant in the expanded area, but nothing is definite. "I'm not certain whether Watsonville needs

another fancy restaurant," he said. He's also looking into the feasibility of a store that would sell outdoor furniture.

The idea of expanding, Kaplan said, is to strengthen the center around its major tenants — Nob Hill Foods, PayLess and Bennett's clothing.

The expansion will be near the Rancho Cerritos mobile home park. The EIR says these steps will be taken to minimize the visual impact: A 6-foot fence on the property line; redwood trees to screen the view from the park; no loading zones facing the park; a traffic barrier to minimize access to the rear of the property; and a 125-foot setback from the park to the commercial buildings.

Because of the expansion's proximity to Struve Slough, a number of erosion and drainage-control measures will be needed, the EIR said.

Watsonville Square is now the only major center in Watsonville that's fully leased (Freedom Centre, outside the city, also is), but no tenants have been signed for the 9,000-square-foot expansion this year.