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# Capitola Mall developers win city points

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The developer of a proposed Capitola Mall expansion gained points with the Capitola Planning Commission last night but the transit district lost.

The commission approved in concept a transit center smaller than sought by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District. What's more, commissioners praised the developer, Cypress Properties of Menlo Park, for coming up with the plan, and chastised the transit district for requesting too much space.

The plan calls for routing cars and pedestrians around a center placed between Sears and the 41st Avenue mall entrance, in about the same spot as buses stop now.

"The developer has turned around considerably," Commissioner John Elstad said, "from 'No, hell no, I don't want buses,' to giving them a pretty good setup."

Commissioner Howard Dysle said, "The transit district has bought and paid for a bus stop over in Santa Cruz and one in Watsonville, and when they come to Capitola, they want the developer to pay for the whole thing."

They commended Cypress Properties for revising other parts of the mall expansion, as well, in response to what has often been sharp criticism from both city officials and residents.

Commissioners' recommendations on further revisions, such as moving the Clares Street loop road to enlarge the parking lot for a proposed 7,000 square-foot library, are expected to be considered by the City Council on Dec. 11.

John Gatto of Cypress Properties said groundbreaking could start as early as May if the plan continues moving forward, with stores to open one year later.

The revised 304,575-square-foot expansion plan is about 20 percent smaller than originally proposed, and includes a 91,805 J.C. Penney store and a 54,000-square-foot Leask's Department Store.

Gatto said last night he has yet to complete purchase of the property for the expansion. He

said he needs to file a tentative map of the project by the end of this year in order to buy the land.

Therefore he asked that a development agreement, requested by the city to ensure completion of the expansion, be hinged on something other than the permit process, such as groundbreaking. No recommendation was made on that request.

Commissioners did agree with the developer that median strips on the Clares Street loop road should be maintained by Capitola, as are similar strips throughout the city.

They also recommended that bicycle racks and lanes be considered, that a wall to minimize noise to nearby residences comply with recommendations in a yet-to-be-completed noise study, and that no outdoors construction be done on Sundays.

Sommerfeld Avenue resident Janice Kerrick asked that greater consideration be given to the aesthetic appeal of the back of the mall.

Agreeing with her was Thompson Avenue resident Roy Johnson, who said what's now the back of the mall would probably become the front when the loop road is built.

He also asked for improvements to the loop road/Capitola Road intersection, including connection of the loop road to Bulb Avenue across the street, removing a median strip and installing traffic signals to allow cars to turn left onto Capitola Road.

That suggestion was strongly backed by Commissioner Elstad, who predicted "some real smashing accidents" if the intersection isn't improved. The commission recommended more study.

Transit district officials objected to the proposed transit center because it has room for only six buses at a time. Even without the expansion, seven buses are sometimes there simultaneously.

Ed van der Zande, manager of development and engineering for the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, said surveys showed that nearly half the people riding buses to the mall either shop or work there.

REFERENCE