

Auto plaza sought in city's greenbelt

By JOAN RAYMOND
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Three car dealers want to put an auto plaza on vacant lands currently protected from development by the city's growth-control ordinance.

The auto dealers are seeking City Council support for a June ballot measure to undo the city's 1979 growth-control initiative, called Measure O.

Measure O is set to expire at the end of 1990, unless voters approve changes to it.

The auto dealers want to change Measure O so that vacant lands preserved for greenbelt zones be-

tween Capitola Road and the Small Craft Harbor could be turned into an auto plaza.

If the dealerships cannot move soon to a new site, they will have to leave the city, taking an estimated annual \$600,000 or more in sales tax revenues with them, dealers' representative Lee Courtright told council members Tuesday.

Courtright said the dealers are under pressure from corporate headquarters to either move to larger premises or lose their franchises. The moves must be under way by 1987 and preliminary plans must be submitted next fall, he said.

Council members unanimously ap-

proved a recommendation from Joe Ghio to form a council subcommittee that would work to keep the dealerships in the city limits, but to preserve portions of the greenbelt lands in open space. Ghio, Michael Rotkin and Mardi Wormhoudt were appointed to the subcommittee.

Courtright asked council members to keep the project non-political.

"My biggest concern, and this may sound silly, is that we don't want to make a political issue out of this. We would like to work with the council," said Courtright.

But Ghio called the proposal "a very sensitive one, and in large measure, political."

Courtright's announcement comes when auto dealers throughout the county are jockeying for the best positions in auto plazas.

A partnership of three auto dealers is buying the greenbelt property from the Margaret Kinzli family, Courtright said. The partners are Courtright, who has the Nissan/Dodge franchise and is a partner in the Toyota franchise; Charles Canfield, Courtright's partner in the Toyota business; and Bill Winterhalder, who has the Ford/Lincoln/Mercury dealership.

Canfield is also the president of the Seaside Co., the owner of the Boardwalk amusement park. His company is a major landlord in the beach area and a key player in negotiations for development of the beach area.

It was the Kinzli family that filed a lawsuit against the city to challenge Measure O, alleging it amounted to an unjust taking of their 60-acre property. The city won the case in federal district court in 1985.

At the time of the court decision,

city officials and council members lauded it as the biggest legal victory in the city's history.

Courtright said the deal is in escrow, but is not contingent on city approval of permits.

If the Santa Cruz relocation is impossible, Courtright said, the dealers have secured an alternative site in "Live Oak-/Capitola." He declined to say whether that site is in the new 41st Avenue auto plaza.

"We're interested in Santa Cruz. If not, we will sign for other property," said Courtright.

The project plans call for nine parcels of three acres each to be developed into the plaza, with some parkland. The remainder of the 60-acre parcel — including a knoll above the harbor — would be left vacant for now. The parcel is at the site of a proposed Broadway-Brommer Street extension.

REFERENCE

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