

"They wanted something that felt like a village, that felt local and familiar to them and catered to local shopping needs."

MATTHEW THOMPSON, architect



BARRY SWENSON BUILDER/CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC

An artist's rendering shows proposed buildings for the new Aptos Village, which could break ground in late summer or early fall of 2011.

# Plans show vision for new town center

New drawings detail proposed buildings, grassy commons for vacant lot

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APTOS — Covered walkways, inviting porches and a grassy town commons that can hold up to 1,000 people are just a few of the features that developers hope will rise on six overgrown acres in the heart of Aptos Village.

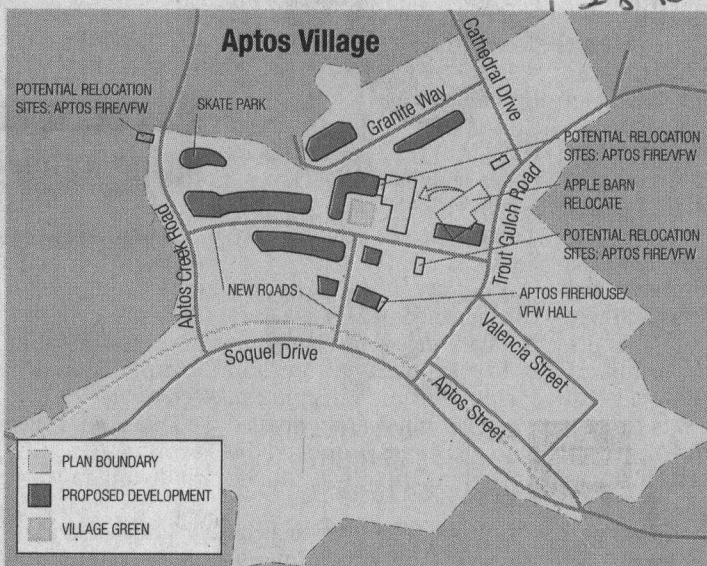
Those details are included as part of the new Aptos Village Project, development plans for building out the vacant Soquel Drive lot, the historic home of a bustling train

depot, logging mills and apple-packing plants. Detailed drawings were submitted to the county July 15 and released to the public on Tuesday.

Most of the ideas came from community meetings held over the past nine years, said principal architect Matthew Thompson with Thacher and Thompson Architects in Santa Cruz.

"They wanted something that felt like a village, that felt local and familiar to them and catered to local shopping needs," Thompson said.

As a result, Thompson said a handful of different architects have worked on the design to give the development the feel of a downtown that has grown over time, he said. For example:



ANTHONY L. SOLIS/SENTINEL

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## APTOS

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■ The historic apple barn, which once was a packing plant, will be strengthened and renovated to unveil its vintage wood ceiling beams. The original redwood siding will remain, Thompson said, but will be reinforced and receive a fresh coat of paint.

■ A long-planned village green will boast trees, picnic tables, raised planters and benches. It should comfortably hold 30 people on their lunch break or 1,000 people for an event like a political rally if the two new streets through the property are blocked off, Thompson said.

■ Awnings will hang over sidewalks and many buildings will include wide, open porches to make the development more pedestrian-friendly. Trees will separate sidewalks from the street.

■ Colors and textures of new buildings will match those of existing structures. But the proposed new buildings include a variety of architectural styles and ideas, deviating from the existing historical pattern. "The buildings look like they come from all kinds of different places at different times," Thompson said.

■ Some two- and three-story buildings will include first-floor storefronts and upper-floor balconies and residential apartments overlooking the street.

■ The historic Bayview Hotel, at four stories tall, will remain the largest building in town.

The Aptos Village Project follows the Aptos Village Plan, which was unanimously approved by county supervisors in February. The Aptos Village Plan governs 15 acres in the heart of Mid-County, about six of which now sit vacant. The plan lays the groundwork for private developers to build new shops and apartments, a bicycle or skate park, a grassy commons and two new streets, among other amenities off Soquel Drive between Aptos Creek and Trout Gulch Roads.

The new development proposal, or Aptos Village Project, describes the buildings to be erected following the village plan's guidelines, drafted over the past eight years. The development plan should go before the county's Historical Commission this fall, Planning Commission by the end of the year and Board of Supervisors in early 2011. If plans are approved, construction crews should break ground in late summer or early fall of 2011.

"It's a positive step forward that they've brought it this far," said Supervisor Neal Coonerty. "It's been through a lot of public scrutiny, it seems to be a plan that people are comfortable with and can move along."

Randall Adams, senior planner with Santa Cruz County, said his department has worked extensively with Barry Swenson to make sure the project lines up with the guidelines approved earlier this year.

"We're still working out the kinks," Adams said. "They've come a long way."

The Aptos Village Project details are now available only through the Santa Cruz County Planning Department. Call 454-2580 for information.