

Owners Worried e Oak Shopping er Proposal



The Largest Parcel of the Development Site in Live Oak is Owned by Redtree Properties

express their interest.

After taking public comments, County Supervisors directed Burns to continue researching the idea and report back on February 27.

Burns said the agency will now begin the process of identifying potential developers, initiate more detailed traffic studies and begin scheduling the first of many community meetings to discuss the project design.

If everything goes as planned, Burns said the agency will then complete contract negotiations with the chosen developer, enter into the often convoluted permit process and then temporarily acquire the necessary properties from the current landholders to sell them to the developer.

Burns said the whole process could take two years at best, but said he could foresee it taking up to four years.

The impetus for the development came from the owners of Redtree Properties, previously

known as Santa Cruz Lumber, who control approximately half of the proposed development site. They approached both the county Planning Department and the RDA during discussions of the General Plan update.

According to a report issued by the RDA, Redtree's desire was to change the site land use designation from commercial service uses to retail oriented uses. It was determined that residents in the area also supported the change, so the General Plan was revised to designate the Redtree and surrounding properties for retail uses.

Unanswered Questions

Although RDA officials are generally positive about developing the site, they do recognize there are a handful of issues left to be resolved.

■ The first question to consider is the amount of "leakage" of local dollars consumers are spending outside the county on

retail purchases. Using a 1990 study by Keyser Marston Associates, Burns estimated this leakage to be as high as \$200 million annually. Burns thinks as much as half can be recaptured with this development proposal.

■ The site for the development is under dispute, primarily from business owners who currently occupy the parcels where the development will occur. One businessman who spoke at the recent public hearing suggested that the open spaces in Pajaro might be a more appropriate area to develop. But RDA officials consider the Commercial Way site to be far better in terms of attracting larger-scale retail and manufacturing businesses. If property owners refused to sell, the agency, at the direction of County Supervisors, could exercise the power of eminent domain and purchase the land at market value. Burns noted that the RDA

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