

# Traffic an obstacle on road to success for Aptos Village

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Aptos Village residents appear to have a pretty good idea of what they want their community to be — a cluster of thriving businesses nestled in a neighborly atmosphere with turn-of-the-century charm.

The question is how to achieve it. A handful of those seeking an answer got together for a brainstorming session last week with local architect Jeff Oberdorfer.

"I live here and I have a business here, and I do think it is neighbor-oriented," one resident said of the Village's character.

For Village residents trying to design the town of their dreams, parking and traffic problems are the biggest obstacles, Oberdorfer told residents.

Because parking is tied in

with land use and building issues, he said, residents must solve parking problems first. Last week's session was the first in a series of three workshops aimed at doing that.

Known for his innovative style of guiding an area's residents into doing their own designing, Oberdorfer offered his ideas of traffic problems and listened as villagers responded.

Among problems with the current design of Aptos Village, residents cited the traffic back-up at Soquel and Spreckels drives during rush hours, lack of adequate parking through the Village and the tendency of customers to drive to their destinations rather than walk.

Shopkeeper said their customers have trouble getting to their stores because of the parking shortage.

"The complaint I get from my customers is, they come over and there's no place to park," one said.

Store owners cannot depend solely on those within walking distance to support their businesses. "If I relied on Aptos Village for my business," another owner said, "I'd be broke in a couple of days."

Possible solutions listed were a traffic light at Soquel and Spreckels drives, a left-turn lane on Trout Gulch Road, more centralized parking for store employees and customers, and improvement of pedestrian pathways to encourage walking.

"The question is whether we can develop a parking plan where people park, and have pedestrian pathways and encourage people to walk the town," Oberdorfer said.

He has never found parking at capacity in the Village, he said. His preliminary studies show that lack of "prime" parking space and too many cars parked all day are the biggest parking problems, he said.

Parking counts done at noon, the busiest part of the day, have shown the Village at 62 percent capacity, Oberdorfer said. At 9:30 a.m., parking was at 40 percent capacity and at 4:30 p.m., 46 percent capacity, he said.

However, the all-day parking figure was high, accounting for 43 percent of the parked vehicles.

Residents should look at creating more centralized parking to accommodate village employees, Oberdorfer said, but not necessarily one big lot.

"The middle part of town is

as yet undeveloped, and in my mind it's what's going to make or break parking," he told residents.

That area consists of three parcels of land bordered by the Bayview Hotel, Aptos Station and Granite Way, Oberdorfer said.

If the property owners there agree to cooperate with a parking plan, rather than allowing development to proceed haphazardly as in the past, parking problems can be alleviated, Oberdorfer said.

Aptos resident John Doering, a business consultant who helped get the traffic study under way, suggested a one-way loop through the Village to help traffic flow. The loop would eliminate the need for a traffic light and improve the capacity of the roads by 50 percent, Doering explained.

Money for the traffic study, which is expected to cost \$8,500, is coming from the Aptos Village Improvement Fund. Provided by developers' fees, that fund was minimal until the Carlino project — a plan for 50 single-family units on Trout Gulch Road — was approved, Supervisor Robley Levy said.

Levy was not at the workshop, but said she hopes to attend the next one.

"I'm just very pleased that the parking study's going forward," she said.

Only about 15 residents showed up for the workshop, but Oberdorfer said later that he expects more to participate in the next one, planned for four to six weeks from now.

"Folks tend to turn out once ideas are generated, to react to them," he said.