

# Downtown plan adopted

VISION SANTA CRUZ

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SANTA CRUZ — With little discussion and virtually no disagreement, the City Council on Tuesday adopted Vision Santa Cruz' first principles for rebuilding downtown.

Those principles were drafted following a series of public hearings, a questionnaire and help from design and economic consultants.

The council had asked Vision Santa Cruz, a 36-member committee made up of government and business leaders, to specifically address only a few issues, such as building heights, parking ratios and housing, including single-room occupancies.

Vision Santa Cruz went further and also forwarded proposals on architectural design, open space and landscaping.

The committee recommended that most new buildings on the mall be no taller than three stories and that their design develop individual character while retaining elements of the existing flavor of the mall. Clear design guidelines should be adopted, the panel recommended.

"Recognizing the need for a socially active commercial and civic downtown core and the desirability of a pedestrian orientation, a strong network of public and private open spaces which are easily



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

## Merchant Protsman: face realities

used, maintained and managed, should be created," Vision Santa Cruz recommended.

The panel also recommended building mix of new housing units, including a total rebuilding of all lost single-room units in well-managed and maintained locations.

The Downtown Association presented minority papers covering a number of those areas and, in general, underscoring economic necessities.

Spokesman A.C. Smith urged the council not to create any new ordinance limiting building heights, saying a cap may force developers to charge higher rents for retail space than many of the current businesses could afford.

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"We support mixed use (housing) throughout downtown, with the caveat that steps must be taken to ensure that concentrations of housing stock that would be incompatible with the area's primary function as a commercial core be avoided," he said.

Merchant George Protsman, who said he represented property owners, urged the council to look to the future and not "follow the past as a blueprint."

"We must face the reality that what we lost cannot be replaced. It must be replaced with the economic realities of the 1990s," he said.

The design for downtown, he said, should be attractive to investors and "create the climate in which our parents would feel safe walking down the mall at 8 o'clock in the evening," he said.

Protsman urged the council to adopt recommendations by the Police Department that as much space as possible be put under private ownership, including sidewalks, benches and tables, so that trespassing laws could be enforced if needed. It recommended that any open space designed for public gathering should be located for minimum impact on businesses and shoppers.

The Police Department also recommended that landscaping not be so extensive as to hinder police-patrol visibility of sidewalks and storefronts.

Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt questioned why the Downtown Association found it necessary to offer minority reports, when it and the

Chamber of Commerce had appointed half of the representatives to Vision Santa Cruz.

Smith replied that the Downtown Association's report was not designed to differ from Vision Santa Cruz, but merely to underscore the economic realities that had been discussed.

Much of the public testimony centered on the Sentinel's account of Vision Santa Cruz' discussion of the problem of street people the night before.

At that meeting, a sub-committee chairman said the biggest question potential investors are asking is what will be done about problems created by street people on the mall. Businessman Larry Pearson said what used to be a social problem has now become an economic barrier to reinvestment.

Vision Santa Cruz responded to the report by voting to create a task force to try to deal with the problem.

Two speakers asked for someone from Vision Santa Cruz to comment on the accuracy of that report, but no one responded. One man who said he had attended most of the Vision Santa Cruz meetings said he believed most of the reporting on Vision Santa Cruz had been "misleading and sensationalistic."

In adopting the principles, the council remarked on Vision Santa Cruz' ability to reach consensus on difficult issues.

"It's a miracle that all parts of the committee could come together with something that they and the council could agree on," said Councilman John Mahaney.