

# One tall ride

## Boardwalk newcomer to dwarf the Dipper

By KAREN CLARK  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A new Boardwalk amusement ride that would stretch 100 feet higher than the pinnacle of the Giant Dipper was approved by the city's Zoning Board Thursday night.

"It was clear to everyone that it could become kind of Santa Cruz's Space Needle, visible from any area (of town)," said Robert Bickal, chairman of the Zoning Board. "Some felt that was not necessarily a bad thing, that it was not a misfortune to have that sort of landmark at the Boardwalk."

The 180-foot ride — the equivalent of an 18-story building — is called the Space Shot. It's similar to the new Drop Zone ride at Great America in Santa Clara, although it's designed to rocket riders to the top in addition to plummeting them to the bottom.

The ride's unanimous approval from the Zoning Board came with a key caveat: Members said their approval was based on the Seaside Co. coming up with an appropriate lighting plan for the ride that would not make it a blazing finger of garishness against the night sky.

"We know there's a sensitivity around that, and frankly we're prepared to deal with it," said Ted Whiting III, vice president of the Seaside Co., which operates the Beach Boardwalk. "Our sense is that it won't stick out as much as people might think at first."

In fact, Seaside Co. President Charles Canfield told Zoning Board members that the appearance of the ride would be "in the best of taste."

Unless someone appeals the Zoning Board's decision to the City Council before 5 p.m. on Oct. 7, Seaside Co. officials are free to put together an acceptable lighting plan and then negotiate a deal for the \$1-million-plus ride.

Councilwoman Katherine Beiers, who said the height of the ride shocked her when she first read about it, indicated it wouldn't surprise her if no one appealed the board's decision.

"I just find that people aren't paying that much attention," said Beiers. "We seem to be on a roll with ... building things. The community just hasn't noticed things as much as in the past."

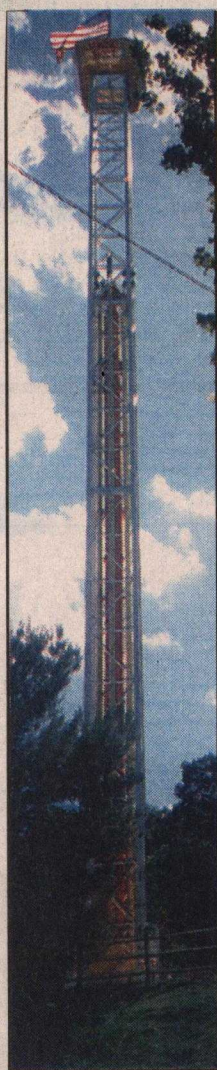
The zoning in the district covering the Boardwalk includes a 40-foot height limit, but that's for buildings. City planners recommended the Zoning Board approve the 180-foot-high ride, noting that although it's tall, it's not bulky and would not block views.

"It's an amusement park, and it's a ride," said Bickal. "I'm sure they can come up with appropriate lighting that's not garish or distracting to people in the immediate area. ... It's apparent the height is necessary to do what that ride does."

The Seaside Co. has embraced the Space Shot because it is a state-of-the-art thrill ride that will keep the amusement park competitive.

Space is at a premium at the small Boardwalk, so another selling point is the ride's narrow base

Please see BOARDWALK — BACK PAGE



The Space Shot is the equivalent of an 18-story building.

## Boardwalk ride

Continued from Page A1

(seven feet), which means it can be installed without another attraction having to be removed.

The plan is to put the lighted tower between the carousel and Hurricane roller coaster.

"The amusement industry is a very competitive industry, particularly now with the economy seeming to get better," said Whiting. "We need from time to time to bring in new pieces that offer state-of-the-art rides that people have come to expect. ... People are looking for thrills."

Seaside Co. spokeswoman Ann Parker noted that

the Space Shot is the shortest version of this type of vertical slingshot ride. There are about a dozen Space Shot rides already installed around the world.

"My sense of it is that over time it becomes part of the landscape," said Whiting. "I'm sure some people don't like the Giant Dipper, but to others it's part of the backdrop."

The last major ride installed at the Boardwalk was the Hurricane, which opened for business in 1992. The Seaside Co. hopes to have the Space Shot ready in time for the Memorial Day crowds.