

Library design studied

Residents provide designers with input

By Richard Palmer

—Large windows or skylights, sound insulation, display spaces and "as little fluorescent light as possible."

—A buffer separating stores from homes, a reflection of the town's character, a place for social and cultural events, "a home away from home."

Those are some of the features and functions that Boulder Creek's new library should have, say residents.

The views were related last Wednesday when some three dozen residents met with library designers at a community forum at Boulder Creek Elementary School.

The meeting was the first of three meetings planned so that residents can have a say in the design of the library.

Attending the meeting was county Supervisor Joe Cucchiara and representatives of the two firms that will be designing the library; Peter Calthorpe of Van der Ryn, Calthorpe and Partners of Sausalito, and Jeff Oberdorfer of Jeff Oberdorfer and Associates of Santa Cruz.

Oberdorfer explained the community design process by noting that residents "know more about the site and the community's needs than anyone else."

"You can tell us things we couldn't possibly know unless we lived here," he said, urging those attending to hold nothing back in stating what they'd like to see in their library.

Though one resident voiced skepticism over the community design process — stating that he'd rather have "experts" draw plans that residents could review — Cucchiara pointed out that plans will be forthcoming, and residents can join the design process whenever they like.

"The process must take human beings into consideration somewhere along the line," Cucchiara said, and it's far better to do so at the beginning rather than at the end.



Designers Peter Calthorpe, left, and Jeff Oberdorfer discuss plans at the library forum in Boulder Creek.

Also, Oberdorfer noted, what may be "obvious" to one person may come as a complete surprise to another.

One such consideration — that the library be one building — was countered early on in the discussion. One resident suggested that designers may want to consider the library as a series of "redwood cabins" rather than a single structure.

Anne Gulliver related how the library should serve as a community center that could handle cultural and social affairs, while another resident, Beth Nelson, suggested the building have acoustics that would enable the library to host small musical events.

Furniture should be easily

moveable so that open space can be made for story telling and skits, said resident Mary Hammer. Larry Kinder said the library should reflect the town's character, and he created a flurry of interest when he produced photos of the old hotel, the Boulder Creek House, that once sat on the library site.

Kinder noted that there's an old swimming pool on the site that could serve as a fountain, and that remnants of an old orchard — apple and peach trees — still thrive, as do two palm trees.

Saving trees was listed as a goal, as was using native plants for landscaping. Other suggestions included study spaces for students; deck, patio or courtyard areas that would make use of the natural setting; space for storing historical

documents; a "media center" for records, tapes, slides, filmstrips and the like; lighting controls so that rooms could be dimmed for showing films; adequate parking, signs, pedestrian access; and a children's area with appropriately scaled amenities.

During a break in the meeting, architect Calthorpe termed the breadth of the suggestions "amazing" and expressed delight about the participation.

Despite the county's tight financial situation, Cucchiara said the money for the library was "locked up."

The next library forum will be held Wednesday, July 7, from 7 to 10:30 p.m. at the Boulder Creek school. The final meeting has been scheduled for July 28.