

Capitola Mall plans before City Council

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CAPITOLA — The long-proposed Capitola Mall expansion plan will come before the City Council Thursday night with a recommendation for approval from the city's Planning Commission.

This is the second go-round for the controversial plan, which has been reduced about 20 percent from original plans.

The original proposal called for a near-doubling of the county's only covered shopping mall. That plan was rejected by the council in August because of concerns about the closeness of new mall buildings to existing neighborhoods and a predicted 78-percent increase in traffic.

The new plan still includes two new anchor stores — a 91,805-square-foot JC Penney and a 54,000-square-foot Leask's. It also includes a site for a 7,000-square-foot Capitola branch library, which the city would build.

Total size is now 304,575-square-feet, compared to the original 395,000-square-foot proposal.

The revised plan — while not without problems — won over plan-

ning commissioners with the additions of improvements to reduce both noise and traffic, as well as an agreement between mall developer Cypress Properties and the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District on the location of a new bus-transfer center.

A new loop road is proposed behind the mall to take some of the traffic burden off 41st Avenue. The revised plan moves the loop road 70 feet away from homes in the Lotman Drive/Sommerfeld Avenue neighborhood behind the mall, instead of the original 40 feet.

Most of the objections throughout the two-year process have come from residents behind the mall.

The plan is scheduled to be heard at Thursday night's meeting, which begins at 7 p.m. in the council chamber at City Hall.

However, the council has a record nine public hearings scheduled, so the meeting is expected to run very late.

Other items on the agenda include proposed revisions to the city's mobile home rent-control ordinance and a proposal to buy back the Capitola Wharf concession lease from Rick Karleen for \$250,000.