

Capitola reduces Auto Row traffic-impact fee

CAPITOLA — Developers of Auto Row have gained a 26-percent traffic impact-fee reduction, lowering the estimated \$211,000 fee to \$156,000.

The City Council required the fee as the developers' portion for future traffic improvements to nearby 41st Avenue.

The council two weeks ago approved Auto Row, the mid-county's largest project since the opening of the Capitola Mall a decade ago. Four Santa Cruz area auto dealers representing 10 makes of cars will move to the 10-acre parcel next to Highway 1 between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road.

Grading on the site is expected to begin by mid-April, contractor Brian Bogaard told The Sentinel. The dealers hope to be relocated and open by the end of this year.

City Manager Steve Burrell Thursday night recommended reducing the 50-cents-per-square-foot fee to 37-cents-a-foot. There is 422,000 square feet encompassing the site.

Burrell based the reduction on the fact that the fee originated to pay for specific traffic improvements in the 41st Avenue area. The state, however, has since agreed to pay for all of the 41st Avenue overpass

widening.

Council members two weeks ago agreed to reduce the fee and directed Burrell to return with a specific amount. They adopted the new fee without comment.

Planning Director Steve Russell said the reduced fee would now be applicable to any new developments in the 41st Avenue area.

Council members agreed to lower the fee after Gary Reece, spokesman for applicant DaPont Construction, maintained that traffic studies showed the project's

traffic to be "minimal" compared to the former residential use projected on the site. Reece also argued that Auto Row was not directly on 41st Avenue.

The council wanted to insure that developers paid their "fair share" for future traffic improvements.

The auto dealers moving to Auto Row include Marina Pontiac-Cadillac-Buick, Santa Cruz Porsch-Audi-Isuzu, Santa Cruz British Jaguar-Subaru and Roy Baldwin Oldsmobile-AMC.