

City commission likes new Ford's design

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STAFF WRITER

Detailed plans for the new Ford's Department Store, as well as a small mercado along Union Street, were unveiled yesterday and both passed muster with Watsonville's Design Review Commission.

Patricia Kain, an architect with Stanton and Associates in San Francisco, presented a three-dimensional model and an artist's rendering, in color, of the new store to be built on the 400 block of Main Street, the

site of the old one, which was destroyed in the Oct. 17, 1989, earthquake.

The new store will be 75,000 square feet, 35,000 square feet less than the old store. Senior Vice President Hal Hyde has said space will be used more efficiently in the new one.

Plans for the two-story building call for two similar entrances in front and back. Both include two-story arching windows made of glass panes, surrounded by pinkish granite. There will also be a major en-

trance along the West Beach Street side of the building.

The outer walls will be in shades of gray, with beige concrete columns, gray awnings, more pinkish granite around the bottom, and strips of red piping "to add texture and scale," Kain said. Gray piping will also wrap the building just under the eaves, creating a "modern interpretation of a cornice," Kain said.

Ford's applied for a building permit on Friday, Hyde said. The approval by the Design Review Commission means there

are no more major hoops for the plans to go through.

Managers hope to fast-track the project, and to have the new store ready for opening on Oct. 17, 1991, the second anniversary of the earthquake. In the meantime, the store many people consider an anchor for downtown business is in temporary quarters at Rodriguez and West Beach streets.

Architect Michael Stanton was a member of the Urban Land

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Institute panel that toured Watsonville in the spring and recommended ways to rebuild from the earthquake.

The Design Review Commission also gave final approval to a small open-air market, or mercado, on Union Street along the blank wall of El Charrito Market at Union and East Beach streets.

Three vendors' stalls will be 15-feet-by-10-feet and have a fixed counter. One stall will be an opening to what is now the counter-window of El Frijolito restaurant. Eight more 10-by-10 stalls will not have counters. All the stalls will have roll-up painted steel doors. There will also be a patio area with benches and potted fruit trees.

Architect Bob Corbett said the stalls were designed to look

light, airy, and "trellis-appearing."

The Planning Department had pushed for the plans to include awnings over each stall. Design commissioners agreed there needs to be something to break up the "mini-storage facility" look of the stalls when the doors are all rolled down at night.

But Corbett said he wanted to find other ways to do that besides awnings, which he said would mar the light look he'd been striving for. He also reminded commissioners that the vendors' wares themselves would add color and variety.

Commissioners agreed to leave room for exploring alternatives to awnings.

The owner of the property, Bill Codiga, said he'd be applying for a building permit within a week. He said he has already had some calls from potential vendors.