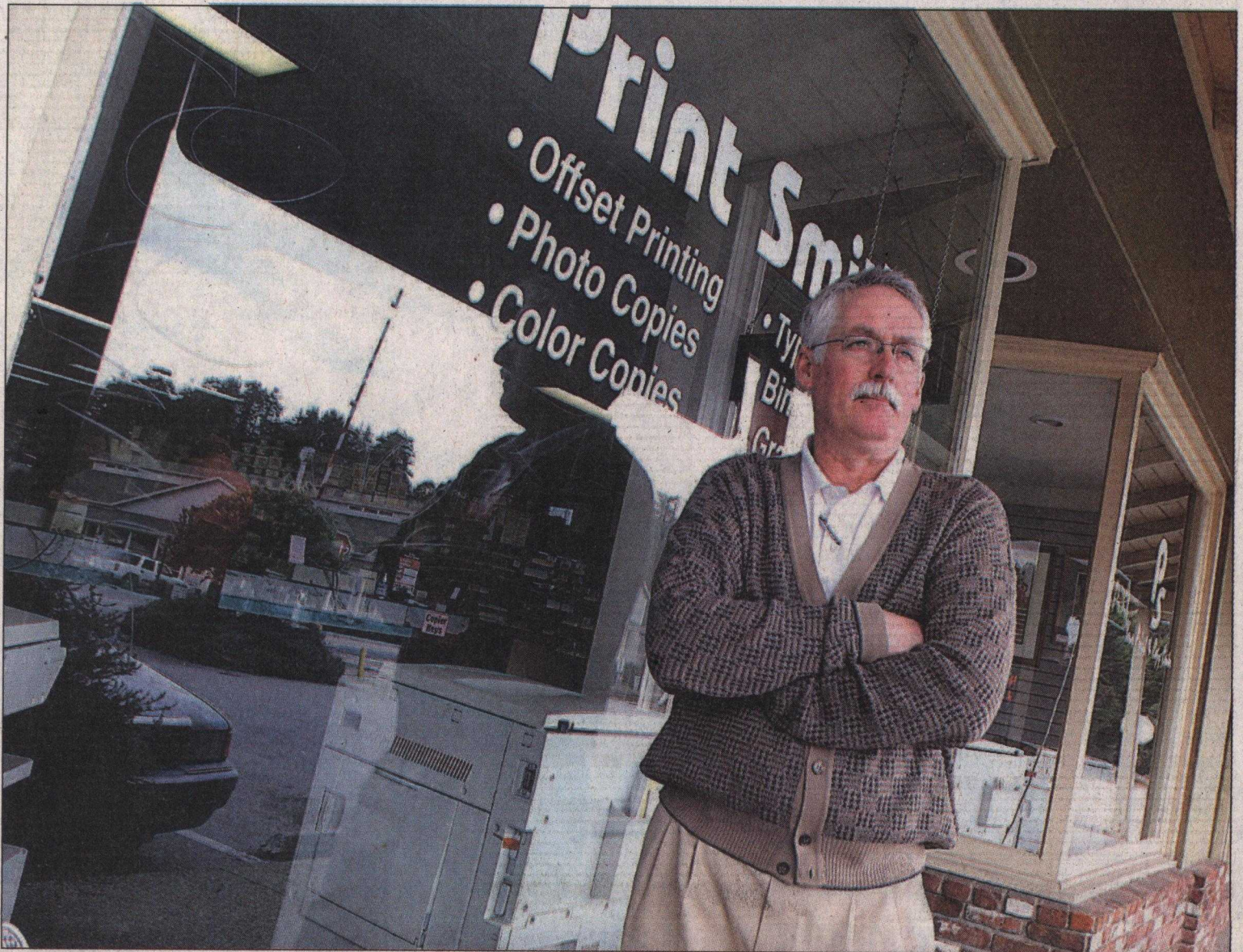


# A New Era for Aptos?

Aptos-2000

AFTER NINE YEARS, EFFORT TO REVITALIZE TOWN CENTER UP FOR COUNTY APPROVAL



Print Smith owner Peter Truman supports the Aptos Village Plan.

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER  
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APTOS — Until 1949, the old Santa Cruz-Watsonville Road passed right by then-bustling Aptos Village, which had an economy that thrived first on lumber and later on apples.

But the mills to cut virgin redwood trees were gone by 1899 and the last apple packing plant closed in 1959. Santa Cruz-Watsonville Road, which once passed through Aptos Village on what is now Soquel Drive, was straightened out and turned into Highway 1 in 1949, leading drivers away from the heart of town.

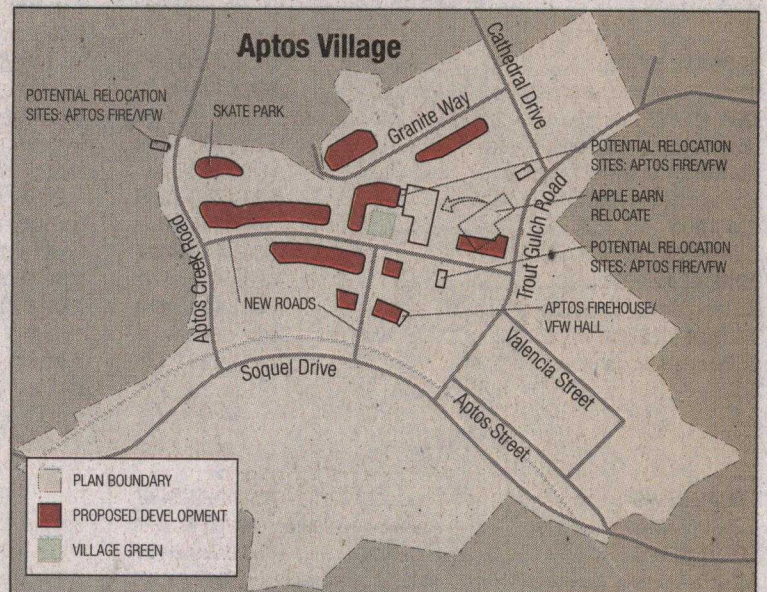
Decades later, county leaders are considering plans for a new town center to revitalize the vil-

lage even though the logging, orchards and Highway 1 travelers are gone.

The Aptos Village Plan, to be considered by the Planning Commission this week and tentatively by the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 23, is the culmination of a nine-year effort to plot the town's next era.

"I really like the idea that we get this center of Aptos back," said county Supervisor Ellen Pirie, who spearheaded the planning effort soon after her election in 2001. "That's what it was for 100 years."

If approved, the plan would govern 15 acres and allow for a grassy village green, skate park, extensive sidewalks, two new



ANTHONY L. SOLIS/SENTINEL GRAPHIC

SEE APTOS ON A2

**'I really like the idea that we get this center of Aptos back. That's what it was for 100 years.'**

ELLEN PIRIE, county supervisor





The Aptos Village Plan being proposed includes a village green in the vacant 6-acre parcel behind Aptos Station and the Bayview Hotel.

SHMUEL THALER/  
SENTINEL

# APTOS

Continued from A1

streets and 500 parking spaces. The historic Apple Barn, a former packing plant that now houses a collection of antique dealers, would be rotated and likely converted to a grocery store, said Jesse Nickell, vice president of Barry Swenson Builder, which owns about three-quarters of the empty acreage to be developed.

New buildings from one to three stories tall could contain small shops and upstairs apartments. The historic Bayview Hotel, at four stories tall, would remain the largest building in town.

"It's kind of a retro theme," Nickell said.

The applications considered this month are for zoning and county general plan changes to allow the new development, not for the buildings themselves. Barry Swenson Builder architects will submit their specific building plans at a later date.

The new Aptos Village Plan, crafted through numerous public meetings over the last nine years, replaces a previous plan that was approved in 1979 and last updated in 1985. Differences include:

■ The previous plan governed 80 acres and called for 2,500 to 3,000 new residents, while the new one covers

15 acres and recommends about 200 new residents.

■ The previous plan recommended Granite Way and Trout Gulch Road become one-way streets in opposite directions for through traffic. The new one calls for two new streets to T-off at the village green.

■ The older plan envisioned mostly small offices and shops, but allowed up to 10,000 square feet for any one building. The new plan designates the Apple Barn as a 15,000-foot anchor store and allows a "sub-anchor" of 7,500 feet, with the rest being small shops and residences.

The older plan languished as most attempts to develop the lots failed for various reasons. Those included a lack of cooperation among property owners and unpopular proposed projects, among others.

The Aptos Village Plan has not drawn the picketers and controversies that have plagued other major development proposals in the county, like La Bahia in Santa Cruz or the Rispin Mansion in Capitola. Still, community reaction ranges from enthusiastic support from neighboring businesses who welcome the extra traffic; to anxiety from antique dealers who could eventually move to accommodate the new grocery store; to frustration from neighbors who wonder if the plan is truly necessary. "Aptos is a bedroom com-

## IF YOU GO

SANTA CRUZ  
COUNTY PLANNING  
COMMISSION

**WHAT:** Consideration of the new Aptos Village Plan

**WHEN:** 9 a.m. Wednesday

**WHERE:** Board of Supervisors chamber, fifth floor, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz

**DETAILS:** [www.sccoplanning.com/index.html](http://www.sccoplanning.com/index.html).

## APTOS VILLAGE PLAN

Details include:

- Grassy village green
  - New skate park
  - 500 parking spaces
  - Plans to move and convert the historic Apple Barn into a grocery store
  - Mixed-use buildings with shops downstairs and apartments above
- Source: Draft Aptos Village Plan

new development will scatter the drug users and homeless now drawn to the empty lot marked for the village green.

"I can't wait for it to happen," Truman said. "To have that built out and finished off with a public green would be a boon to this little community."

Sharon Burnam, who runs Mercantile West at Village Fair, a collection of 15 antique merchants in the Apple Barn, said time will tell whether she can stay in Aptos after the barn is made over into a grocery store.

While that might be a few years away, "it is a concern," she said. "We're just kind of on hold."

Nickell said he hopes the antique dealers will stay in the village and rent spots in the new development. But the future economy and Swenson's asking rent will help determine where Mercantile West goes next, Burnam said. Meanwhile, she said, she's in the barn "until the bloody end."

Longtime Aptos resident Paul Elerick said he supports the new plan, largely because the number of potential residents has dropped from 3,000 to 200.

"I like the reduction in density, and moving the apple shed is not going to be the end of the world," Elerick said. "I think the framework is there for something decent to happen, if people can live with that."

munity," said Arnold Ver-saw, who lives on Cathedral Drive near the planned town center. "Most people who live here want to live here because there is no type of town. If we want to walk we go in the forest. We don't need any more side-walks."

But Peter Truman, co-owner of Print Smith on Soquel Drive, said he hopes