

Redevelopment Plans Approved

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Plans have been approved for the development of a two and three-story shopping and office complex on what is now a downtown Santa Cruz public parking lot.

If the plans become a reality, what is now the parking lot at the end of Cooper Street along Front Street (near the UA theaters) will become a 54,000-square-foot building with arches, arcades, brick facing, decks, patios, a public promenade and a pedestrian bridge connecting the top story to the upper level of the covered parking lot next door. The plans also include 51 parking spaces.

The approval of the plans by the Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency marks the end of a series of delays and disagreements over development of what is the last remaining large parcel of vacant land in the so-called San Lorenzo Park Plaza redevelopment area.

The history of the parcel reaches back to the days after the flood of the San Lorenzo River in 1955, when the City formed a redevelopment agency to oversee the reconstruction of lands in the flood zone.

Through the years, the County Center, a major drug store, supermarket, restaurants, apartments, motel and movie theater — as well as parklands along the river — have been developed as part of the post-flood construction.

Development of the parking lot parcel has been stalled for a number of reasons. Plans for a major retail store there never materialized and, more recently, Bank of America last year shelved plans it had for a new headquarters on the site. Some observers maintained footdragging on the part of the city had killed the bank project.

The owner of the site and the developer of the plans currently on the drafting board is Carl N. Swenson

Co. Inc., a San Jose company which also owns the Castagnola's restaurant building adjacent to the site.

The city Redevelopment Agency — which is comprised of City Councilmembers wearing different hats — approved the latest plans submitted by Swenson on June 8, with Mardi Wormhoudt casting the only "no" vote, and Bruce Van Allen abstaining.

The architect, Max Rouzier, said construction will begin as soon as the financing for the project can be arranged.

"If all goes well, we will begin after next year's rainy season is over," said Rouzier.

No leases have yet been signed with prospective tenants, said Rouzier.

The architect stated the sizes of the available spaces will be flexible enough to accommodate large or small enterprises.

"We would hope to get a

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good restaurant with outdoor dining," added the architect.

A focal point of the building will be a tower elevator, possibly of glass, and a rotunda at its entrance.

The height of the building is to be three stories facing Front Street and two stories at the back portion of the site. However, the architect said the roofline will appear throughout as three stories.

The ground floor space will be assigned to retail shops and offices will be housed upstairs, according to the plans.

The architect added there would be room for an out-

side dining deck above the rotunda.

Senior city Planner Joe Hall, who has been overseeing the project plans, said the covered parking lot next door would be re-stripped to allow for parking spaces taken away by the new building.

The developer has one year to secure a building permit. After that year is up, he is allowed to apply for a six-month extension under city regulations.

In the meantime, the city continues to lease the site from the Swenson company for a public parking lot.

Associate Planner Larry Pearson noted that the de-

veloper is including parking spaces in the plans, although it was not his legal obligation to do so.

If the project is completed, it will complete the city's design for a public promenade from the Pacific Avenue Mall along Cooper Street.

Whatever differences may have occurred in the past, Pearson said the approval of the plans "was one good example of a cooperative effort between the public and private sector...a great deal of care and attention went into what would go there. Swenson is to be complimented."