Downtown Santa Cruz Revitalization Needed, But Where?

By BILL NEUBAUER Sentinel Staff Writer

Revitalization of the city's downtown area is needed and should be implemented, but not through the creation of a regional shopping center in the North Pacific Avenue area, the Santa Cruz City Council was told Tuesday by the city redevelopment commission.

The commission wrapped up more than a year of intense analysis of the downtown needs by presentating a detailed report and recommendations to the council during a study session in the civic auditorium.

The "thumb's down" on a regional shopping center did not appear to set well with Councilmembers Charlotte Melville and John Mahaney, and both indicated they expect to say much more on the subject when the commission report goes before the council for official decisions in about a

Councilman Bert Muhly, on the other hand, appeared willing to accept the commission's recommendations for other types of revitalization efforts in lieu of the regional center development.

The commission is recommending a broad-scale program that would include further analysis and detailed planning for the following three initial projects:

1. An automobile sales and service plaza in the vicinity of River Street and Route 1.

2. Creation of additional shopping facilities contiguous to and south of Pacific Avenue Garden Mall, particularly in the area bounded by Pacific. the San Lorenzo River, Cathcart and Laurel streets.

"Tentatively," the commission states in a summary of its study conclusions and recommendations, "we favor an open mall of less than regional shopping center size. The facilities should provide for an additional department store and additional specialty stores space.

tial and commercial use.

In addition, the commission should have it all.' recommends improvements to the mall, extension of the mall to Cooper Street, increased commercial development in the

and parking in the downtown area, but notes that these are the responsibility of other gov-ernmental bodies.

Several business leaders expressed opposition to the concept of forgetting about putting in a North Pacific regional shopping center. These included Les Ley, president of Santa Cruz Lumber, Charles Gunn, and Earl Clark, spokesman for Ernest W. Hahn, Inc., one of the nation's largest commercial builders and shopping

center developers.

Hahn last April outlined a possible \$30 to \$50 million regional shopping center for the North Pacific area at a meeting attended by city officials and business leaders.

In rejecting the center described by Hahn, the redevelopment commission reported it would be difficult to integrate the center with the mall, that it would create a bi-polar shop-ping area that could have destructive consequences leading eventually to the deterioration of the mall. Another reason cited was the impact such a center would have upon traffic

During study session dis-cussion of the rejection of the concept, Lee Courtwright of Santa Cruz Datsun backed the commission proposal for an auto plaza for the area, and he said he and four other dealers are willing to locate in such a

Ley, on the other hand, claimed the auto plaza would not in his opinion be the best use for the valuable land area. Rather, he said: "A shopping center and the downtown would be most compatible. It would improve city revenues from sales taxes and the shopping image of Downtown Santa Cruz would be substantially different from what it is now.

Ley said that the city, with the present downtown setup, "is bypassing a substantial por-

tion of the buying public."
He concluded: "I have looked 3. Rehabilitation of the upper all over and I can't see any floors of the mall for residen-other area for a regional cenother area for a regional cen-ter. We want it all. I think we

The redevelopment commission asserted in an interim report on strategy for revitalizing the downtown that: ""This area behind the Old Town much discussed development (a North Pacific shopping

And the commission ex-mall) is here judged to be in-presses concerns about housing feasible and undesirable. Major department store chains do not appear to be interested, including Penney's; there are serious traffic problems; the lack of effective linkage with the Pacific Mall is an obstacle; a negative effect on existing merchants is likely to be serious; a regional center is a growth-inducing force not consistent with the assumed lowgrowth policy; and the reaction of many citizens and business persons ranges from negative

> City Manager David Koester. who was absent, questioned in a

to indifferent.'

report of his own that "major the regional center in the North department store chains do not Pacific but not from 41st Aveappear to be interested, includ- nue. ing Penney's."

al meetings with top Penney's pete with 41st Avenue it should representatives indicated the be understood that sales tax store has a strong desire to revenue growth in the city will

porium was detailed, also was owners, he said. cited by Koester as evidence there is interest by major re- Levin presented the longtailers in locating in a mall in awaited report and paid tribute the North Pacific area.

assumption that there would be ticular, whom he described as growth-inducing effects from an economic authority respon-

Koester warned that if a re-Koester reported that sever- tail center is not built to comrelocate downtown.

Hahn's proposal of last April, needs. This would result in a in which interest of the Emheavier tax burden on home-

Commission Chairman Alan to the commission as a whole Koester questioned also an and to Richard Ratcliff in par-

data in the study.

Melville made it clear she thinks some commercial development should go to the North Pacific, and she argued vigorously against buildups of shopping facilities in areas south of the mall. Her big argument here was that beach traffic jams the area now.

Mahaney complimented the commission for its work but said he had felt the members

Melville made it clear she does something now. And to council should continue on its course, making political decisions for all the people.

"We should not be panicked," he said, "by people who want to use our power of eminent domain to satisfy their desires. This would change the "rob Peter to pay Paul" syndrome, saying: "The idea seems to be that if we build here we will dry up Watsonville" it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want it all.

had been appointed to work out or 41st Avenue.' something for the North Pacific Muhly said area on which "we could go

said he had felt the members here we will dry up Watsonville

Muhly said there is now thinking at the state level that sales tax revenues in an area Mahaney said he can see should be shared and that this

want to keep our character.

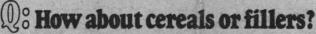
"We have to stop making land use decisions on the basis of tax revenues alone," Muhly concluded.

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