

# Downtown Santa Cruz Revitalization Needed, But Where?

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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 presenting 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 month.

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."

3. Rehabilitation of the upper floors of the mall for residential and commercial use.

In addition, the commission recommends improvements to the mall, extension of the mall to Cooper Street, increased commercial development in the area behind the Old Town Clock.

And the commission expresses concerns about housing and parking in the downtown area, but notes that these are the responsibility of other governmental 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 shopping 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 flow.

During study session discussion 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 plaza.

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 portion of the buying public."

He concluded: "I have looked all over and I can't see any other area for a regional center. We want it all. I think we should have it all."

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

mall) is here judged to be infeasible 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 low-growth policy; and the reaction of many citizens and business persons ranges from negative to indifferent."

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

report of his own that "major department store chains do not appear to be interested, including Penney's."

Koester reported that several meetings with top Penney's representatives indicated the store has a strong desire to relocate downtown.

Hahn's proposal of last April, in which interest of the Emporium was detailed, also was cited by Koester as evidence there is interest by major retailers in locating in a mall in the North Pacific area.

Koester questioned also an assumption that there would be growth-inducing effects from

the regional center in the North Pacific but not from 41st Avenue.

Koester warned that if a retail center is not built to compete with 41st Avenue it should be understood that sales tax revenue growth in the city will not keep pace with city revenue needs. This would result in a heavier tax burden on homeowners, he said.

Commission Chairman Alan Levin presented the long-awaited report and paid tribute to the commission as a whole and to Richard Ratcliff in particular, whom he described as an economic authority respon-

sible for much of the economic 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 had been appointed to work out something for the North Pacific area on which "we could go ahead."

Mahaney said he can see

downtown merchants moving to 41st Avenue unless the city does something now. And to comments that traffic patterns and streets might have to be changed he said: "If Pogonip comes in we will have to look into highway crossings anyway."

Muhly warned against the "rob Peter to pay Paul" syndrome, saying: "The idea seems to be that if we build here we will dry up Watsonville or 41st Avenue."

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

may be the thing of the future.

In any event, Muhly said, the 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 character of Santa Cruz. Perhaps the question is do we want it all, as Mr. Ley said, or do we want to keep our character."

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

**Q: If a Chicken Frank looks and tastes like an all-beef hot dog, who needs it?**

**A:** You do. Because it gives your family more protein and less fat than the leading all-beef hot dogs. Yet it tastes just like they do, it's as easy to prepare, as much fun to eat and as popular with kids.

**Q: But why chicken?**

**A:** What with all the talk about hot dogs, we thought it was time for a better one. And what could be better than Foster Farms 100% California chicken? (If you're going to put chicken in a hot dog, it ought to be the best chicken.)

**Q: How about cereals or fillers?**

**A:** Foster Farms new Chicken Franks are made with no cereals

