

Beach Street promenade discussed at workshop

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SANTA CRUZ — Fun, fun, fun.
Moderne fun.

A second public workshop on creating a Beach Street promenade, held Monday night at the Civic Auditorium, drew a lot of ideas on how to improve Santa Cruz's major tourist area, but little consensus.

Most of those attending — a mix of beach-area business people and city staffers — seemed to favor a "theme" that would emphasize the fun and play aspects of beach life, while providing for increased pedestrian walkways and street improvements.

One big problem might be money — when the City Council hired a landscape architecture and planning firm last summer to develop a plan for the promenade, it gave them a budget cap of \$200,000.

But the firm, Callander and Associates of Menlo Park and Monterey, will report back on Dec. 19 with three design schemes and cost estimates. At a January workshop, these schemes will be winnowed down to one scheme.

C. Gary Hyden of Callander told the workshop participants that he favored creating a theme based on Moderne architectural styles. The beach Casino building, at the western end of the Beach Boardwalk, is an example of this style.

But, Hyden pointed out, other styles are also prevalent in the beach area, including Spanish Colonial Revival — the La Bahia apartments, for example.

He did not favor incorporating revival styles into the promenade, since that look has been much used in California. He also said the city could go to a look that emphasized natural materials, such as wood and stone. But such a look might not be festive enough, Hyden said.

Anyway, workshop participants said they wanted something that would bring a "carnival atmosphere" to the beach area: perhaps awnings or covered walkways, vivid colors, an emphasis, said one business owner, on "good fun rather than good taste."

Others were concerned that changing the beach area would leave out permanent residents or would create an area that would be empty when the tourist season ended.

Among the ideas discussed for improving the streetscape were sidewalk cafes, balconies, a pedestrian walkway separated from traffic and planting more palm trees.

Much of the early design work on the promenade idea focuses on the Beach Street-Cliff Street-Municipal Wharf area and proceeding easterly down Beach Street and past the Beach Boardwalk. The boardwalk's owner, Charles Canfield, attended the workshop.

Some of those attending urged the consulting firm to also consider improvements for the eastern end of Beach Street, since improvements to the Riverside Avenue bridge will mean even more traffic will be coming to beach along Riverside and by way of Third Street.

No one seemed to want the architectural theme to carry over onto building facades, which at present represent a cavalcade of styles. Nor did anyone want the beach area to be turned into a "Bavarian village," as one woman put it.

Instead, the thrust seemed to be on street improvements, including a possible widening of sidewalks. Several business owners voiced hopes that this would put more pedestrians on the north side of the street, across the street from the beach.

Others were concerned that any widening would wipe out precious parking spaces.

A major component of the promenade would be a redesign of the busy wharf intersection. Hyden noted that at a previous workshop, participants had suggested a sculpture or artwork could go into the middle of the intersection, creating a "landmark" that would serve to direct traffic and add to the "character of the area." Someone else suggested a fountain might be the best thing for the intersection.

Another idea for the promenade is to use "special paving" to denote pedestrian areas and crosswalks.