

They're still planning for Capitola's future

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CAPITOLA — Capitola may almost be built out, but there's still a future to be planned for.

And that's the purpose of the city's ongoing efforts to revise its General Plan. That plan is a blueprint of sorts, clarifying what sort of development may occur in the future. The last time Capitola approved such a plan was 13 years ago.

The city's schedule calls for a revised plan to be recommended to the city council in December. The city is now selecting a citizens' committee to work on the various aspects of the plan, which will include seven primary elements — housing, land use, conservation, safety, noise, circulation and open space.

Planning Director Susan Tupper concedes Capitola is "almost built out." But, she also sees a critical need for an updated plan due to the scarcity of vacant land in the two-square-mile city.

"When resources become scarce, de-

'The intensity of people wanting to develop property now is much more because the opportunities are so limited.'

— Susan Tupper, Planning Director

mand for them goes up," she said. "The intensity of people wanting to develop property now is much more because the opportunities are so limited."

An example of that intensity is the number of people buying old houses simply for the land. Instead of renovation, they're tearing down the homes and rebuilding new ones.

"We probably had 20 of those applications in the past year," said Tupper. "A few years ago, we had none."

She said there are just 90 vacant residential lots in Capitola. Fifty-five of them are located in the Deanes Lane area

adjacent to the Capitola Mall.

Besides future housing, the revised General Plan will take a close look at circulation patterns and traffic. According to Tupper, a just-completed survey of residents resulted in traffic being singled out as Capitola's biggest problem.

"We're going to have to get creative and innovative to come up with solutions to traffic," said Tupper. One suggestion the city will investigate involves utilizing the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way for pedestrian and bicycle use, which it is hoped will take some burden off the streets.

The second most-cited problem was intensification of use along the Esplanade in Capitola Village, said Tupper.

"It'll be difficult to remove uses that are there now," she said. "But we can change the General Plan so no new uses or conversions to restaurants are allowed."

As far as what residents like about Capitola, the list is long. They include city amenities, such as the community gymnasium and Jade Street Community Center and the venerable Capitola Theater.

More than 90 percent of those surveyed said they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the quality of life in Capitola, said Tupper.

The council is scheduled to select the General Plan Committee at Thursday's meeting. Volunteers are needed from three neighborhoods — Cliffwood Heights, the Jewel Box and the 41st Avenue area.

Interested residents should contact Tupper at 475-7300.

REFERENCE