

41st Ave. plans diff merchants

By BOB SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Business owners on 41st Avenue were up in arms Thursday night over city plans to build a median strip on 41st Avenue from Capitola Road to the Southern Pacific railroad tracks.

In addition to the median strip, business owners told the council they were opposed to plans for signals at the intersection of 41st Avenue and Jade and Brommer streets, bicycle lanes on 41st Avenue and the elimination of on-street parking.

The council agreed to some modifications that will answer some of the major objections voiced at the council meeting last week, but said it will go ahead with the half million dollar project.

Revised plans for the federally-financed project will be brought back to the council at its meeting Thursday, April 11.

The council seemed taken aback to learn last Thursday that nearly 90,000 square feet of retail store space — an area larger than Mervyn's department store — is being proposed for the site of Shaffer's Tropical Gardens and a vacant field

next to it that becomes a pumpkin patch each Halloween season.

And next to the pumpkin patch, the Spa Fitness Center will open this week with a traffic count of 3,000 cars a day, owner Harry Jenkins said.

The council agreed to eliminate the median between Reposa and Melton streets and lengthen a left-turn stacking lane for southbound 41st Avenue traffic at Reposa.

At the same time, city staff members were told to work with property owners on the east side of 41st Avenue and develop an internal road network that will link the parking lots of the Spa, the pumpkin patch and Shaffer's Tropical Gardens with Jade Street, similar to what the city did with 41st Avenue businesses between Capitola Road and Clares Street.

Don Starr, partner with the Shaffer family in the Tropical Gardens property and owner of the pumpkin patch property, told the council that an agreement has been signed with Barry Swenson Builders to build 52,000 square feet of retail space on the 152,000 square feet Tropical Gardens parcel. Starr,

himself, wants to build another 32,000 square feet on the pumpkin patch property, the council was told.

Paul Shirley, president of Santa Cruz Ambulance Co., told the council that ambulances leaving his operation on the west side of 41st Avenue north of Brommer Street may be subject to life-threatening time delays if they have to first go south on 41st Avenue to Brommer Street and then make a U-turn and go north again.

The council proposed cutting a special slot in the median strip opposite his driveway that would allow ambulances to cross the median strip and make a left turn in emergencies.

But there will be no concessions made to businesses in the King's Plaza shopping center or to businesses further south on 41st Avenue which do not want to lose their on-street parking.

Several King's Plaza businesses told the council that they did not like having left turns from their parking lot onto 41st Avenue northbound

restricted to just one slot in the median.

Public Works Director Craig French presented the council with plans prepared by traffic engineer Dick Ivy of Barton Aschmann Associates of San Jose and civil engineer Fred Werdmuller of Bowman and Williams of Santa Cruz, showing that northbound 41st Avenue traffic would be able to make left turns into the driveways on both sides of Tiny's Restaurants, but cars leaving the shopping center parking lot would be able to make left turns onto 41st Avenue from only the southernmost driveway.

The engineers argued successfully that the northernmost break in the median strip was too close to Capitola Road and its left-turn stacking lanes to safely allow left turns there.

Merchants' representatives argued that the restrictions would restrict the flow of freeway-bound traffic into and out of the center.

The council was a little more sympathetic but ultimately felt there was nothing they could do to preserve on-street parking for Capitola Auto Parts, The Frame Studio and O'Neill's Surf Shop, all of which have limited off-street parking and heavy drive-up traffic.

REFERENCE