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Capitola Mall Expansion Support

It's not final yet, but a plan to change zoning next to Capitola Mall to allow more shopping facilities is alive and well.

The proposed zoning change

passed the Capitola Planning Commission Monday night by a 5-0 vote, according to City Planner Pat McCormick. The proposal must now go before the

Capitola City Council.

The land in question is 16 acres of land next to the Capitola Mall shopping center, north of the intersection of Capitola Road and Bulb Avenue. Currently, those 16 acres are zoned for apartments and condominiums.

Public hearings on the proposed change have stretched out for nearly two months, as opponents, which have included citizens and representatives of the Santa Cruz City and Santa Cruz County governments, have claimed that more shopping facilities there would cause too much traffic congestion and would worsen the current housing shortage.

Not only that, the opponents argued, but other shopping areas would be threatened due to fewer customers who would turn their shopping attention to the new stores of the 41st Avenue area.

In approving the proposal, planning commissioners also accepted an environmental impact report (EIR) by Charles

Delk and Associates of Walnut Creek. The EIR contends that the conversion of the residential area will make traffic worse in the area as well as adding fuel to the housing shortage. However, the EIR said that additional public transit and housing development in other areas could solve those problems.

In adopting the proposed change, the planning commission agreed with the EIR that there are solutions to problems arising from construction of more shopping facilities. Legally, the commission had to make those findings in order to approve the project.

The planning commission's vote to approve the project is just a recommendation to the city council. The council will hold a public hearing on the matter, probably in late July, and then vote on whether to approve the plan.

The region in question does not lie in the coastal zone, so approval by the Capitola Council is the final step.