

Harley center OK'd

Cycle shop approved for Seabright area

East Side
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SANTA CRUZ — City Council members decided Tuesday that the potential for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle shop to become a catalyst for revitalizing the Eastside was great enough to outweigh any possible drawbacks.

The council voted 5-2 to deny the appeal of a Zoning Board decision to allow Santa Cruz Harley-Davidson to open a motorcycle dealership/repair facility on Soquel and Seabright avenues.

Councilwomen Celia Scott and Katherine Beiers voted against the proposal, saying they believed the city's General Plan clearly shows that such a use was not desirable for that area. They also worried that noise and traffic issues would become a nuisance for neighbors.

Some 100 people on both sides of the issue packed the Council Chamber to hear the decision on what has become a hot topic among Eastside neighbors.

The council majority clearly believed that tough mitigation measures coupled with a clear threat that they would revoke the business' use permit if those measures aren't followed were enough to ease neighborhood concerns.

Those mitigation measures included two key ones:

- Anyone conducting service or sales test rides of the Harleys cannot make a right turn from the business' parking lot into the Seabright neighborhood.

Business owner Mike James also must post signs discouraging other patrons from making similar turns into the neighborhoods. He also must create maps to other Santa Cruz attractions that provide routes other than those along Seabright Avenue or Gault Street.

- The site cannot be used for organized rallies, club events, touring stops or any other activity that makes it a destination or rendezvous point.

"We are not indifferent to quality of life issues," said Councilman Scott Kennedy. "To me, I'm very concerned about what I consider a very tenuous Eastside business district."

Kennedy and other council members believed that the Harley business would be a regional draw that would bring people who then would patronize other businesses. In addition, they said, it could show other potential business owners that the Eastside is on the upswing.

But Scott said the Eastside plan clearly shows that this area is earmarked for a retail business that services neighborhood needs.

"If we don't want to follow our plans, I think we're going to lose our way," said Scott. "I believe our planning is becoming more and more revenue driven."

Throughout the lively discussion on the issue, the only council member who didn't make any comments was Michael Hernandez. He is the only council member who lives on the Eastside.