

Aptos residents fight to preserve their Village

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A handful of Aptos residents disenchanted with county planning decisions met last night to talk about preserving the turn-of-the-century charm of their village.

A plan aimed at doing just that was approved by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors in 1979, but county planners aren't following it, said John Doering, Aptos business consultant who organized the meeting.

"The development of the village is gradually creeping farther and farther away from the plan," he said.

For instance, the plan calls for lighting to be consistent with the village's old-fashioned character, he explained, but the county recently tried to install tall, sodium streetlights instead.

Fortunately, he said, residents were able to persuade the county to install wooden poles and streetlamps similar to those in Capitola Village.

The Village Plan also calls for brick sidewalks, Doering said, but the county is planning on installing concrete curbs and gutters.

Not only are the aesthetic features of the Village Plan falling by the wayside, Doering said, but money to pay for those improvements is being mis-

placed. One fund had been ignored for so long that no one at the county level knew exactly how much money was in it, Doering said, but employees told him it was about \$1,200. An audit finally showed the fund to contain \$10,000.

These examples illustrate the need for residents to "bird dog" the county, Doering said.

points to a need on the part of the villagers, and could perhaps be resolved by putting up bulletin boards.

Another resident complained about abandoned cars on Village Drive, but said she had been successful in having several hauled away.

"Sometimes you just have to keep hounding and hounding

'If we do make our voices heard, then people will listen.'

If planning isn't closely watched, he said, "the first thing you know, you're going to have a village that looks like 41st Avenue."

That's why he wants Aptos residents to take the future of their village into their own hands. The 15 residents gathered last night agreed they would like to have a say in such matters as zoning, street improvements and building construction.

However, neither should smaller matters be overlooked, they said, because everything influences the character of the village.

One resident worried that too many signs were being posted. "It's looking tackier and tackier and tackier," she said.

Doering said the situation

and hounding, but it gets done," she said.

Though last night's meeting — the first for the "Aptos Village Committee" — was sponsored by the Aptos Neighbors Association, Doering would like to see the committee establish itself as its own entity.

"If we do make our voices heard," he said, "then people will listen."

In the past, residents have been too complacent, Doering said, and have allowed county planners to construct whatever they want, not what the Village Plan calls for.

"The people making these (planning) decisions are responsive to public interest," he said, "but there just hasn't been any."