

# Council stands firm on traffic islands

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SANTA CRUZ — Not liking the choice some people made in saying they didn't want traffic islands in front of their homes, the liberal City Council majority Tuesday took back that right.

On a 4-3 vote, the majority said it couldn't afford to have the city's Livable Streets Plan undermined by continuing to let people "veto" traffic islands.

The veto approval was given in

June when the council approved a design of 16 islands to control traffic and beautify the downtown neighborhood areas.

At that time, one resident had expressed so much concern that Councilman Michael Rotkin persuaded the council to agree that anyone who didn't want an island in front of his or her home didn't have to have one.

"That was a mistake," Rotkin admits.

The Public Works Department surveyed residents and found out that

those at four locations didn't want islands.

The islands are formed by bulging the curbs and sidewalks out further into the streets to narrow entrances and exits at busy street corners.

Paul Neibanck, a city resident and professor of environmental studies at UCSC, testified the elimination of some islands was "undermining the integrity" of the Livable Streets Plan.

He said, "It makes me angry to see such a good plan undermined; these issues are larger than one private interest."

The council majority of Rotkin, Mardi Wormhoudt, John Laird and Mayor Bruce Van Allen agreed with him.

"I made the motion," said Rotkin, "but a pattern started here that I don't agree with (and) it seems to me there are traffic safety issues that have to be considered."

Laird said he agreed and that it was much like determining if a neighborhood needed a stop sign. If it did,

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then neighbors should not be allowed to prohibit the sign from going in, he said.

Wormhoudt said, "These are meant to renew the neighborhoods, but safety has always been an issue. The community as a whole has a right to determine street safety."

"The integrity of the plan is paramount."

"But, you can't change the rules now," Ghio said. He said the majority was complaining that to do one side of the street alone was a waste of money and he could agree with that.

"But, I think it's a further waste to do both sides of the street."

Ghio said the board's action in rescinding the veto "is typical of this council; it's telling the people that it

knows best."

The Livable Streets Plan has had the council in hot water before.

In early 1982, just after Laird and Wormhoudt were elected and formed a majority with Rotkin and Van Allen, the majority put a road barrier at the top of California Avenue by the high school.

It diverted traffic one way away from the school, but it also brought hundreds of protests from parents and the teaching staff.

A court decision declaring the Berkeley city barriers to be illegal helped the council majority decide the barrier should be removed.

Rotkin and Van Allen are up for reelection Nov. 8 and the decision to rescind the veto might be part of the campaign against them.