

# Pleasure Point merchants want their area improved

By **DONNA KIMURA**  
Sentinel staff writer

**PLEASURE POINT** — Worried Pleasure Point business owners said their neighborhood is ailing and asked the county for help Tuesday.

"The biggest concern is the rapid deterioration of the area," said Phil Ruiz, owner of Skinny McDoogie's bar at 3910 Portola Drive.

The neighborhood of auto repair shops, take-out restaurants and other small stores has about a 30 percent vacancy rate, he said.

Ruiz and other store owners appealed to county supervisors for support. With help from the county Redevelopment Agency, they presented supervisors with a report Tuesday titled "A Plan for Revitalization."

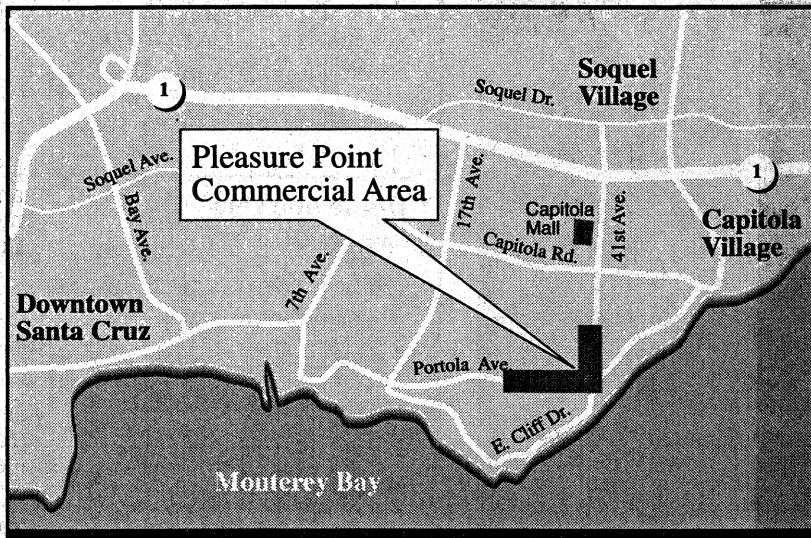
"I think this is an important project," Supervisor Jan Beautz, who represents the neighborhood, said at Tuesday's supervisors meeting. "Clearly, the area should be and can be revitalized."

The draft plan calls for street and sidewalk improvements on Portola Drive from about 26th to 41st avenues. The work would cost an estimated \$1 million, said Tom Burns, administrator of the Redevelopment Agency.

A more detailed plan by the redevelopment agency is to be presented to supervisors Oct. 24.

"As some businesses have left the area, the vacancy rate has increased, and the image of the area has changed from vital to declining," said the report. "This 'broken' image hastens the departure of other businesses as customers leave seeking a more positive experience."

Officials point out the old Opal Cliffs Market at Portola Drive and



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41st Avenue as an example of a vacant building in the neighborhood. The store has been empty since November 1993.

"It's one of the key parcels in the area," said Ron Hirsch of Hirsch and Associates, the broker representing the sellers of the property.

The type of business that will go there likely will be similar to what is already in the neighborhood, such as service-oriented businesses or a retail establishment, said Hirsch.

Hirsch said he is "cautiously optimistic" it will be bought. Several potential buyers have inquired about the old market, which is 11,600 square feet.

But without some positive change, the Pleasure Point commercial area will continue to decline, said the report.

The district is part of the Redevelopment Agency Project Area. Redevelopment funds for road improvements and economic develop-

ment projects may be available.

Under tentative plans, Portola Drive between 26th and 35th avenues would have two travel lanes and a center turn lane. There would be on-street parallel parking, bike lanes, sidewalks on both sides and street lights.

Narrowing Portola Drive on this stretch would make the street more pedestrian-friendly, the report said.

Between 35th and 41st avenues, plans show four travel lanes, bike lanes, a new sidewalk and trees on the north side and street lights.

Shop owners on Portola Drive and lower 41st Avenue felt that poor lighting at night hurts business. The "unattractive image" of the area and graffiti also ranked high as constraints to business, according to a survey.

The nearby ocean was the characteristic that shop owners liked most about the area.