

Residents don't like effects of proposed shopping center

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Capitola mall
12-14-90
CAPITOLA — Residents near Capitola Mall are "maxed out" when it comes to traffic, noise and pollution.

That's the message the City Council received Thursday night when it heard public comments on the final environmental impact report for the 130,030-square-foot Ranch Retail Center proposed for Clares Street across from the mall.

Citizens complained that the report didn't adequately address ways to solve traffic the project will generate, the pollution the traffic will create, and noise that will affect homes close to the stores.

Several of the neighbors contended that the proposed shopping center was just too large.

"You have a chance to put in something elegant and all I hear is it will be something noisy, smelly, with too many cars," said citizen Carolyn James.

Even the county Board of Supervisors got its licks in. Live Oak Supervisor Jan Beautz presented a letter from the board asking that the council not certify the report Thursday night because solutions to some problems weren't adequately addressed.

She suggested that county staff

and city representatives get together to come up with solutions for some of the problems.

Before hearing from Beautz, the council already had decided to put off certification so additional information on pollution controls could be added.

The hearing was continued until Jan. 10, when the council also will also consider approving the project proposed by the former owners of the Brown Bulb Ranch.

Bill Hall, who lives on Lotman Drive right behind the proposed project, noted that the 10-foot wall suggested to buffer noise will do nothing to stop noise from reaching the second story of houses.

He suggested the project be scaled down, moved farther from the homes, and buffered from the homes by a larger landscaped area.

Marc Alexander of nearby Ax-ford Road charged that the report was biased in favor of the developer. "It downplays the alternatives such as downscaling or putting in office space," he said.

Marian Alexander added that the report didn't adequately discuss pollution problems. "We should be planting forests around that mall," she said, calling for 50-foot trees to cleanse the air. "Instead of thinking of adding more, we should think about taking care of what's there."

Most of the comments zeroed in on problems generated by the present mall. "The current mall mitigations aren't working and certainly people have concerns that this new project will be built even closer to their homes," said Supervisor Beautz.