

# County asks Capitola developer to donate

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CAPITOLA — Development of the Brown Ranch Retail Center here eventually could bring traffic improvements on Capitola Road in unincorporated Live Oak.

The county can't require the developers to pay for road improvements outside the city, but County Counsel Dwight Herr told the Capitola City Council Thursday night that the county is negotiating with the developers to contribute a portion of the \$5 million needed to widen and improve Live Oak's portion of Capitola Road.

Herr asked that the city make this contribution a condition of project approval. He also asked for more buffering between the proposed center and nearby residences to cut down on light and noise. Some of the nearby homes are in the unincorporated area.

Herr spoke during a four-hour public hearing on the proposal to build a 130,000-square-foot shopping center on 11 acres on Clares Street across from the J.C. Penney store. Many citizens who spoke against the project complained that the 5,000 car trips a day it will generate will add more cars to roads that are already traffic-packed.

The proposal was postponed to Jan. 24 after council members suggested several new conditions, including more buffering. But having the developers pay the county for Capitola Road improvements wasn't one of them.

The environmental impact report, certified by the council Thursday, states that those using the new shopping center not only will add to traffic congestion in Capitola, but also to roads in Live Oak that lead to Capitola.

Herr noted that, according to the EIR, traffic from the new shopping center will increase traffic on Capitola Road approximately 5 percent between Chanticleer and Seventh avenues and by more than 7 percent between 30th and Chanticleer avenues.

If the county applied the same traffic improvement fees to this development that it does to developments in the unincorporated area, the developers would have to pay \$784,125 toward improvements on Capitola Road, Herr said.

If developers were charged a percentage of the cost of widening Capitola Road equal to the percentage by which the shopping center will increase traffic on the road, they would have to pay \$300,000, Herr said.

He said the \$300,000 is "reasonable and feasible" and should be made a condition of project approval by Capitola. The center is being proposed by Roth Properties and by Brown Properties, owners of the former Brown Bulb Ranch.

Herr said that the methodology the county and developer arrive at could be used in the future on other projects. Council members appeared interested in having the county contribute to the city when projects in unincorporated areas affect Capitola traffic.

"If we have a project that impacts the city roads, we would act in the same manner," Herr pledged.

Councilman Mick Routh said he hoped that the improvements to Capitola Road would coincide with development of the Brown Retail Center. But Herr noted that the county has no money available for the widening project, which could be five to seven years away.

The money given by the Brown Retail Center developers, however, could be used to improve the intersection of 17th Avenue and Capitola Road so that further improvements, such as widening, could be phased in over time, Herr said.

Routh chastised the county for not planning for Capitola Road improvements. "That is the most important road in Live Oak and it surprises me that no



Supervisor Jan Beutz says the county will still press for improvements to county roads. Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

## Nearby residents comment

CAPITOLA — In a four-hour public hearing Thursday, citizens poured their hearts out to the Capitola City Council over a proposal to build the 130,000-square-foot Brown Ranch Retail Center on Clares Street at the site of the former Brown Bulb Ranch.

In the end, the council approved the environmental impact report, but continued consideration of approval of the project until Jan. 24 after recommending some changes in response to citizen comments.

The project is being proposed by Brown Properties, developers of the Brown Ranch Marketplace shopping center, and Roth Properties, developers of Kiddie World Toys and Kiddie World Furniture.

The following are some of the comments aired Thursday on the project:

"If you were really for the people . . . you would be asking Brown why he doesn't build a mall in

Watsonville or in downtown Santa Cruz."

— Wayne Peterson, 38th Avenue  
"I think Capitola should try to buy the property from Mr. Brown and turn it into a park. I just think there is no way to deal with the overwhelming impacts from this project."

— Dwight Dillon  
"Facing the fifth year of a drought should be one good reason (not to approve the project.) We are talking about all these lawns and beautiful trees. And all these businesses will use water."

— Marilyn Marshall  
"We think what we will produce will be a real  
"I support it. I think it will improve my quality of life and my property values."

— Bob Bambauer, Lotman Drive  
"This is the type of development I don't like. I hate to see a sea of cars and a string of buildings."  
— Councilman Ron Graves

redevelopment funds have been committed to it," he said.

Live Oak Supervisor Jan Beutz responded that the county decided first to improve 17th Avenue and roads around schools. "The problems in Live Oak are critical and it is difficult to decide what to do first."

Live Oak resident Dale Wenger also pushed for the city to help the county widen Capitola Road from two to four lanes.

"You can leave all the logistics and brass tacks out and what it all comes down to is we all live here," Wenger said. "You have 10,000 people, but you don't

mind taking millions of sales tax dollars and putting them in your pocket ..."

"In turn, help us out ... I'm asking for cooperation instead of politics," Wenger said.

The county will continue to negotiate with the developers, hoping they make a voluntary contribution to Capitola Road improvements, according to Beutz.

Barclay Brown, one of the developers of the project, said, "We certainly will cooperate with the county if we feel it is our obligation and if we can afford to do it. There is no one saying we have to do this, but if the county and the city keep on disputing, it is not in our interest. It might hold up the project."