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Committee Eyes A Full Mall

By Don Righetti
Sentinel Staff Writer

A series of film slides brought about a sharp turn in mall concept planning yesterday.

After viewing 130 slides taken of malls throughout the U.S. by Charles Abbott, the Santa Cruz City Mall Committee decided to seriously investigate the prospects of making part or even all of Pacific avenue's proposed improvement into a full mall. All recent planning had been on a semi-mall concept.

A full mall is closed to all but foot traffic; a semi-mall allows some form of through vehicular traffic.

At the close of Abbott's slide presentation, committeemen noted that the most active, successful malls appeared to be those closed to vehicles.

Committeemen decided to gather figures for a comparison of full mall and semi-mall costs. City Planning Director Neal Walton was asked to make a preliminary design designating one link of the proposed mall—from Church street to Walnut ave-

nue—as a full mall. Remainder of the mall length, from the plaza to Cathcart street, on Pacific avenue would allow one-way traffic in a serpentine lane.

Abbott, who has completed a widespread field study of malls throughout the nation, told committeemen the full malls cost twice as much or more than the semi-mall installations.

Since the committee has been thinking in terms of a \$70 to \$75 per front foot assessment on Pacific avenue merchants during the semi-mall planning, Abbott's study indicates a cost of \$140 to \$150 per front foot on the basis of a full mall facility.

Actually, most of the malls covered in Abbott's slide presentation cost a great deal more than that. The most expensive, on Fresno's Fulton street, cost \$323 per front foot.

Abbott made several other far reaching observations in a prepared report on his studies. One of these concerned traffic flow surrounding the mall.

"Without good traffic flow and adequate parking a mall is doomed to failure," he said.

"Many malls have stimulated foot traffic 75 per cent and increased retail sales 20 per cent and more," Abbott continued. "Even those malls poorly designed and operated have had the effect of deterring the rush to the shopping centers."

He stated that a well designed mall having adequate parking, attractive facades and smart merchandising can compete with shopping centers and remain a healthy core of any community.

"All it takes is the will to get the job done and to profit by the mistakes of those who pioneered the mall concept," he declared.

Committeemen discussed the advisability of including children's play areas in mall planning, and generally agreed to include such facilities.

Walton reported that an aerial photo and a new map of the Pacific avenue area will soon be available to aid planning.

Following study sessions of Walton's new design plans of the full mall link, the committee is expected to begin a comprehensive cost survey.