

Auto Plaza-Capitola

# Proposed 'auto row' could be in jeopardy

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CAPITOLA — The proposed "auto row" adjacent Highway 1 near 41st Avenue could be in jeopardy due to the too-high density of a townhouse development that is planned in conjunction.

At least, that was the sentiment of the City Council Thursday night. Council members approved the scope of the work for a focused environmental impact report on the project, but also made it clear the 47-unit townhouse development was too dense.

"If the developers want to stick their heads in the sand, it's up to them," said Mayor Michael Routh. "We've already told them we didn't want to see that dense of a project. They may be adding another 90 to 120 days (to the planning process) for not listening."

Added Councilman Bob Bucher: "I thought we were pretty clear. If they (developers) don't believe it, let them get delayed for two to three months. They can get blown out of the water later."

The developers, DaPont Construction of Santa Cruz, were not present at the meeting. Last month, however, the council — sitting as the Capitola Redevelopment Agency — expressed concerns over the 47 units, which amounted to a 15-unit per acre density. Council members said a lower density, namely around 35 units, might be acceptable.

Routh noted that if the environmental impact report is completed on a too-dense housing project, another report would be required by the city on a smaller project. That, of course, would cause delays in the planning process.

The proposed "auto row" is already committed to serving nine makes of cars. They involve three Santa Cruz auto dealerships — Marina Pontiac/Cadillac/Buick, Santa Cruz Porsche/Audi/Isuzu and Santa Cruz British/Jaguar/Subaru/Triumph.

The 9½-acre parcel is located adjacent the freeway between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road. It is one of the largest remaining vacant parcels in the city. The car dealerships would be located closest to 41st Avenue, with the townhouses planned for the Wharf Road side of the site.

DaPont spokesman Gary Reece had earlier told The Sentinel they were hopeful of approval and ground could be broken on the project by January. Routh said that was extremely doubtful, given the too-high housing density being proposed.

Planning Director Steve Russell told the council that DaPont was aware of the council's feeling about the density. He said he would pass that word to them again.

The focused environmental impact report is required for the proposed project to show that negative impacts to the environment caused by the project could be alleviated through mitigation measures.

Such a report will focus on a number of issues. They include traffic and circulation, noise, public utilities and service, visual and aesthetic, archaeological resources, air quality and economic impact.

A consultant will now be selected to do the report.