

# Scaled back beach plan heads for OK

Beach Flats

## Council shoots down Boardwalk expansion, Third Street realignment

By DARREL W. COLE

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The City Council was expected to scrap the realignment of Third Street and an expanded Boardwalk in the Beach Area Plan that was headed toward approval early this morning.

By 12:45 a.m., the final vote had not been taken, but approval was expected as adversaries on the council proposed almost identical major changes to the plan.

The plan, which encompasses about 200 acres, would still include demolishing run-down residences, developing new affordable-housing complexes for displaced residents, and would aim to improve traffic patterns in the area. It also would include developing neighborhood parks, landscaping for Third Street and renovation of the old depot site.

Under the previous proposal, opponents had accused the city and council of selling out to business, mainly the Seaside Co., which owns the Boardwalk and much of the property in the area.

With the changes, however, the council agreed that the major economic catalyst for the area would be the remodel of the historic La Bahia apartments into a 250-275 unit hotel

and conference center.

Councilman Michael Hernandez — who said he consulted with other council members — made the motion to approve the Beach and South of Laurel Area Plan's environmental impact report and overall plan with the Third Street and Boardwalk plan changes.

Mayor Celia Scott then read recommendations by her and Councilwoman Katherine Beiers, which agreed with Hernandez's on eliminating the Third Street realignment and a 1.4-acre Boardwalk expansion.

Although opponents of the Beach Area Plan, including the Beach Area Working Group, were skeptical of the altered plan, others said it was a positive sign to see agreement between Scott and Beiers on the one side and Hernandez and council members Scott Kennedy, Mike Rotkin, Cynthia Mathews and Mary Beth Campbell on the other.

"... I think there are definitely fewer areas of disagreement and that's good," said Scott. "This is a great shift in positions."

In addition, the council also agreed that the proposed transportation improvements, such as a

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# Beach plan

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shuttle, electronic signs and bike paths, be implemented before any project approval.

With no Third Street realignment, which would have forced demolition of some housing in Beach Flats, or Boardwalk expansion, two major public criticisms of the project are eliminated.

"I think this takes the three most controversial things (along with commercial development of Beach Main Lot) out of ... the plan," said Kennedy. "And this moves forward with what are the most important things. I really hope the critics will look closely at what we've done here."

Under Hernandez's proposal, the only way a Third Street realignment or Boardwalk expansion could take place would be through a "community-based planning process," which would require a community task force and another environmental review. The focus, however, is to work on the conference hotel and improved housing for the area.

Doug Rand, an organizer of the Beach Working Group, said he will meet with members of his organization today to determine if they will undertake a referendum on the issue.

"I'm very suspicious with Hernandez's motion, but I'm happy our mayor made her suggestions," Rand said. "The public's recourse if we don't like the outcome is to get a referendum."

A referendum would require about 3,500 registered city voters' signatures to put the issue on a ballot for a vote.

One of the most impassioned speeches of the night came from Hernandez, who was the first Latino elected to the City Council. He began by saying how 15 years ago he worked to build and maintain homes in the Beach Flats neighborhood and chastised the city for so long ignoring the area's needs. Because of that and landlords who let properties turn to slums, he said, Beach Flats needs help now.

"We (Latinos) have been waiting for you gringos to do something for 20 years," said Hernandez, who received some boos from the audience. "Many of you have come out and spo-

## Seaside Co., city to share land

By DARREL W. COLE

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Despite a room full of opponents, the City Council voted 4-2 Tuesday to accept a settlement that brings the city 1.2 acres of parkland on the San Lorenzo River, but allows the Seaside Co. to keep as much as three acres.

The proposal before the council dealt with 2.5 acres to 4 acres of land along the north side of the river near the river mouth. The measurement of the property varies, depending on the map used.

The settlement has been in negotiation for the past year between the State Lands Commission and property owner Seaside Co.

The city was able to secure some of the property because the state had determined there was a question who actually owned the land — now a parking lot — although Seaside had paid taxes and taken responsibility for it since 1933. State officials became aware of the ownership question when Beach Flats property owner Phil Baer brought it to their attention.

Because the dispute would ultimately have ended in a law-

suit that attorneys for the state said would be difficult to win, they recommended a settlement where the state would get 1.2 acres, while Seaside would be allowed to keep the rest. Later, the state would deed the property to the city for recreational use.

Voting for the motion were council members Scott Kennedy, Cynthia Mathews, Michael Hernandez and Mike Rotkin. Voting against were Mayor Celia Scott and Councilwoman Katherine Beiers. Councilwoman Mary Beth Campbell was excused from the vote when she was unable to make the daytime meeting due to her teaching job.

The action angered the approximately 26 people who spoke in opposition of settlement. The majority thought the city should get more of the land.

"The council should not endorse this settlement," Baer said. "This company (Seaside) has made millions and millions of dollars on this property, which was really public land. We could prevail in court if you have the courage to assert the public's interest."

ken for the Latino community and you have no idea. We've come a long way and I'm proud to be a member of this community and this City Council and bring this motion forward."

No public comment was allowed at the meeting. The city held three public hearings over the past three weeks, totaling more than 14 hours. Starting at 7 p.m., it was the council's turn to debate the controversial matter, and despite the apparent agreement on some main points, several smaller issues sparked lengthy discussion.

With the hotel conference center being the major project left, the council debated its aspects. Scott

suggested all its employees be required to be union, and rooms be limited to 250.

"How many of us have successfully built or developed a hotel center?" asked Kennedy, who supported at least 275 units. "We are not the experts in this, and this hotel would be historically preserved as well."

Later, Beiers' motion to limit to 250 units failed by a 5-2 vote.

The Council Chamber was packed with an almost equal number of supporters and opponents. Opponents held up signs saying "Referendum Beach Plan Sign Here" while supporters wore the green "Beach Plan YES" pins.