

Auto-care center to be discussed

Auto Plaza
An auto-care center planned for the Crossroads Shopping Center at Main Street and Green Valley Road will be discussed tonight by Watsonville's Planning Commission.

The center would be 26,675 square feet in total, made up of seven buildings that would include a gas station, car wash and mini-mart, tire sales and service, muffler and brake repair, auto repair, auto parts, and some upholstery and electronics service. An auto body shop in the original proposal was deemed incompatible with the area because of noise and air pollution and has been dropped.

The auto-care center is proposed for a grassy 3.8-acre site between the current shopping center and Struve Slough with direct frontage onto Main Street. The developer is Santa Cruz-based Wave

Crest Development Co.

Members of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch said last week that they are concerned about the project because of its proximity to the slough. Member Dick Bernard said he was concerned about increased run-off from the project and that an existing detention pond, which helps filter run-off, would not be sufficient. He said he is worried about the slough becoming a dumping ground for old auto parts. The city has had problem with similar businesses near Watsonville's sloughs, he said.

The group has other concerns they say have not been fully investigated.

An initial environmental study was carried out and mitigation measures proposed. The plan was reviewed by the state Department of Fish and Game, which gave its approval after the plan was modi-

fied slightly.

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City staff recommends a "negative declaration," meaning there will not be any significant environmental impacts with the proposed mitigations in place. Such a declaration would mean a full environmental impact report is not needed.

In addition to the environmental concerns, members of the Wetlands Watch aren't buying the environmental study's contention that traffic won't get significantly heavier at the already congested intersection of Main Street and Green Valley Road. The study said there won't be a whole lot of new traffic on the road, since most of its customers are expected to already be shopping at the center.

The commission meets at 7:30 in the City Council chambers.

—Chela Zabin