

Wind 'N' Sea plaza whips up a storm



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Genesis Real Group spokesman David Jonas

'The interest is that it's new, exciting and there's nothing like it in town.'

There's love and hate along 41st Avenue

By **KEITH MURAOKA**
Sentinel Staff Writer

CAPITOLA — No matter how you look at it, the new Wind 'N' Sea Plaza on 41st Avenue is making waves. The shopping complex, under construction at the southeast corner of 41st Avenue and Capitola Road, has been described as "innovative" by some and "phony" by others. The architecture is such that you either love it or hate it.

An informal survey of City Council and Planning Commission members found five liking the design and four against. The president and immediate past president of the 41st Avenue Business Association both liked the design.

David Jonas, spokesman for the developer Genesis Real Group, which is building the 25,000-square-foot shopping center, described the architecture as "post-modern."

The exterior features numerous columns and a false-front facade that juts out at various angles. Possibly standing out the most is the color scheme — white and a Miami Dolphin-like blue-green.

Jonas conceded, "There's no question the building stands out. But, I don't see it as a controversial design. To me, the interest is that it's new, exciting and there's nothing like it in town."

He said there has been a "tremendous response" from potential tenants, with already half of the com-

plex spoken for. Bank of the West has already signed a lease, with six others negotiating leases now. The center is expected to open by November.

Jonas maintained the complexity of the design "probably added 20 percent more to what a Plain-Jane, vanilla-type building would have cost." He estimated construction costs at more than \$3 million.

City Council members Jerry Clarke and Stephanie Harlan, as well as Planning Commissioners John Elstad and Howard Dysle, dislike the design. Councilwoman Harlan went so far as to admit she may have made a mistake by not appealing the center's approval to the council.

Wind 'N' Sea gained the approval of the Planning Commission and never came before the council. Harlan says, "I really wish I would have looked at it a little closer at the Planning Commission stage. It's too late to make changes now."

Clarke, during a recent council meeting, maintained, "It reminds me of the back lot of a Hollywood studio." Added Elstad, who was not on the commission when the center was originally approved, "It looks like a 1930s high school back in the Midwest."

Commissioner Dysle, who like Elstad wasn't on the commission when the center was approved, called the building "phony," saying, "I'm not the least bit happy with it."

What concerns Clarke, Elstad and

Dysle the most are the numerous false fronts of the center's facade. Dysle said the false fronts are "phony." Clarke called it an "overpowering design," saying, "The total mass of the buildings tends to close in on itself."

Yet, others like the design using such adjectives as "innovative and unique."

"I think it's unusual," said Councilman Ron Graves, the senior member of the council. "But, I think there's a need for some diversity in a large commercial area like 41st Avenue. It piques my interest."

Fellow Councilman Michael Routh agreed, calling it "unique." He said the design will fit in even better when the Capitola Mall expansion takes place, which includes touches of the same post-modern theme.

Planning commissioners Bill Fisher, Rick Karleen and Norma Kriege — all of whom voted for the design when it came before them — still feel the same way.

"The thing that impressed me most is that the developers weren't hesitant about submitting an interesting design," said Fisher. "Many developers think they have to keep it vanilla in order to get something approved. Our opinion is actually the opposite. We'd rather have something a little different rather than a watered-down design."

Karleen said he sees the architecture as being a "unique landmark" for the complex. Kriege added, "We certainly wouldn't want every building on 41st Avenue to be exactly the same. This particular design is innovative and attractive."

Karen Calcagno, president of the 41st Avenue Business Association, and Larry Maruquez, immediate past president of the same organization, agreed.

"It's not so different or radical that it doesn't fit with 41st Avenue," Calcagno said. "It's a pleasant departure from the usual." Added Maruquez, "It does stand out, but I don't think that's bad. They've gone to a great deal of added expense to come up with something innovative."

Wind 'N' Sea is the third new center to be built on 41st Avenue within the past few months (Four-Star Center and Begonia Plaza are the others).

The Capitola's Mall's \$35-million expansion is expected to break ground beginning Monday. That expansion will nearly double the county's only covered mall, adding J.C. Penney and Leask's as new anchor stores.