

New shopping center gets approval to grow

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

Developers of the Crossroads Shopping Center at the north end of Watsonville were granted a rezoning last night that will allow the center to expand. But the council approved the rezoning only after some concern was expressed over the center's impact on downtown business.

On a 5-2 vote, the City Council approved changes in the zoning and general plan from residential to commercial for part of the Crossroads parcel at the southwest corner of South Green Val-

ley Road and Main Street. Mayor Betty Murphy and Councilman Dennis Osmer cast the dissenting votes.

"That this will have a negative impact on downtown is pretty obvious," said Osmer. "Preservation of the downtown is part of the general plan."

The council's action overturned the action of the city Planning Commission, which voted May 1 against the general plan change. Commissioners expressed fear that a plan to put in a movie theater at Crossroads would conflict with plans for a theater in

the 200 block of Main Street downtown, where construction of a shopping complex is scheduled to begin in the fall.

Although it wasn't part of the application, the issue of the movie theater came up again at last night's meeting.

Lisa Bullen, project manager for developer Barry Swenson's 200-block project, said there were already plans to open a three-screen theater there. The project is scheduled to open next spring.

Crossroads is also planning a theater, with four screens, in its

35,000-square-foot second phase. The first phase, next to the Orchard Supply Hardware store, is nearing completion and is expected to open this summer.

"I just don't want a conflict," Bullen told the council.

Bill Locke-Paddon, attorney for CDM Corp., developers of Crossroads, said the company planned to put in a theater, but would replace it with something else if the downtown theater is built first.

"There's not going to be two new theaters in Watsonville,"

Locke-Paddon said.

John Fry, a partner in CDM, said, "No one's going to go and compete and divide up the market."

Fry said after the meeting that it would be at least the late summer of 1990 before the second phase of Crossroads will be completed.

While the zoning would permit a theater at Crossroads, the developers would still have to get approval from the City Council before putting one in.

Watsonville already has the

three-screen Pajaro Showplace in downtown, plus the Fox, which shows mainly Spanish-language films.

In a separate matter regarding the Fox, the council delayed indefinitely consideration of buying the Fox for community use. The city staff had recommended against it, saying it isn't financially feasible.

Former Mayor Ann Soldo said the citizen committee that had worked on a feasibility study is now looking into the possibility of getting a grant or other private funding to buy the Fox.