

Proposal for 'City of Aptos' appears dead

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With 1991 drawing to a close, two major issues affecting Aptos and Freedom appear moribund if not dead.

Community opposition appears to have sounded the death knell for redevelopment projects in both communities, while legal roadblocks have all but killed attempts to form the Town of Aptos.

Santa Cruz County officials had been working on plans to extend the successful Redevelopment Agency from its beginnings in Live Oak and Soquel into Aptos, Free-

dom and the surrounding unincorporated areas of the Pajaro Valley and into the San Lorenzo Valley.

The idea died in Freedom when large numbers of property owners emphatically told county supervisors they didn't trust county officials and wanted nothing to do with the proposal.

As the opposition mounted in Freedom, Second District Supervisor Robley Levy seemingly read the handwriting on the wall and asked her fellow supervisors to delay the Aptos project until the area's general plan is finished — a process that could take more than

a year.

The county's redevelopment plans for Aptos are viewed by some as an alternative to the proposed incorporation of the community.

That issue has been tied up in the courts with the county Local Agency Formation Commission fighting cityhood proponents over the scope and cost of an environmental impact report.

The commission and its executive officer, Pat McCormick, have been demanding a full-blown EIR on the influence a new city might have on the community.

The Aptos Incorporation Group has contended that a city would have no more impact on the environment than the county government does today. They have said the EIR should be limited mainly to the fiscal effects on county government.

This fall, Superior Court Judge Tom Black ruled in favor of LAFCO, saying a full-scale EIR must be prepared before LAFCO can act on the proposal.

That means the Aptos Incorporation Group could be asked to pay upward of \$100,000 for the study. They had earlier estimated that they could raise between

\$20,000 and \$25,000 for the study.

Following Judge Black's decision, McCormick said he would try to renegotiate the study and get the cost down to the \$50,000 range. Earlier bids had been for \$90,000 and \$130,000.

AIG members contend that the study could use much of the work already done for the now-shelved Aptos Redevelopment Project.

LAFCO rules require incorporation proponents to pay the full cost of the incorporation process — a requirement that some think is designed to thwart any cityhood proposals.

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Ryland Kelley's plans to develop the 71-acre Porter Sesnon property into a conference center remained stalled most of the year.

Kelley's proposal for 130 hotel units, a conference center and a 12,000-square-foot restaurant ran into problems with county planners, who said it would generate more traffic than county standards allow.

Kelley has had a long-running battle with the county over the property, on which he first proposed an ambitious development he called Wingspread. Kelley and his firm, Hare, Brewer and Kelley, of Mountain View, first proposed a 468-unit complex, which would have included a performing arts center.

Kelley gradually scaled back plans as county planners and the public objected to the size of the project. When Kelley submitted the 130-unit proposal last year, he contended it met county General Plan standards.