

Study: Road needs fixes to handle new development

Scotts Valley 2000
 Mount Hermon Road already close to capacity, officials say

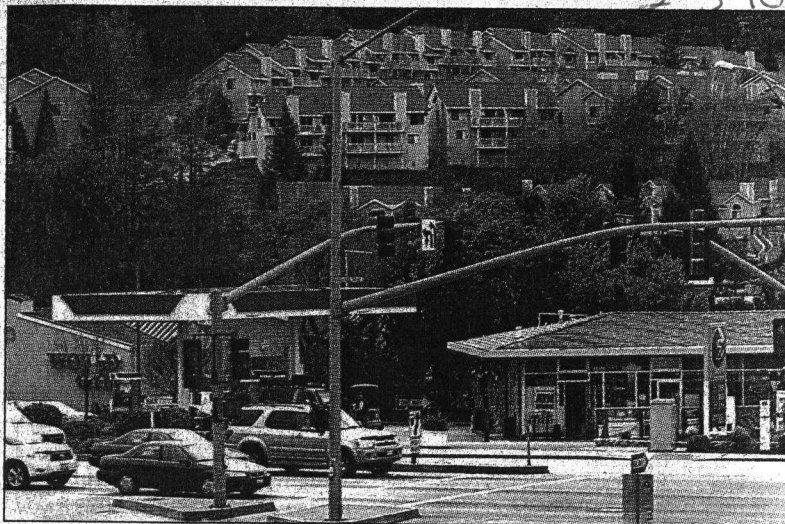
By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER

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SCOTTS VALLEY — One of the county's busiest thoroughfares will likely need a face-lift or drivers will be stuck in gridlock once city leaders move forward with plans to build a town center.

Mount Hermon Road, which connects Highway 17 in Scotts Valley to Highway 9 in Felton, carries more than 33,000 cars each day, according to county statistics. It is the main route for many San Lorenzo Valley commuters to Silicon Valley, and a city hub for grocery shopping, banks and restaurants.

"Mount Hermon is already a challenge given the number of stoplights you have in a very



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The city wants to add another left turn lane from Mount Hermon Road onto Whispering Pines Drive to accommodate the planned town center.

SEE TOWN CENTER ON A2

TOWN CENTER

Continued from A1

short proximity," Mayor Jim Reed said.

"The town center is going to thrive because it's going to draw more people than we currently have," Reed said. "The only way we can draw more people is if we can effectively accommodate the traffic."

To that end, Scotts Valley planners have proposed adding another left turn lane onto Whispering Pines Drive from Mount Hermon Road, based on a recently completed study. Another right turn lane is proposed on Mount Hermon Road at La Madro-

na Drive for those heading for southbound Highway 17.

The suggested improvements come as Scotts Valley moves forward with its long-planned, 22-acre town center. When finished, the center will feature stores, restaurants, a new library and housing, according to city plans. The development is slated for an old airport off Mount Hermon Road, and city leaders have said they hope to attract shops like Banana Republic and Coldwater Creek, among others.

But Mount Hermon Road is close to carrying capacity under the city's general plan, said Ken Anderson, Scotts Valley director of public works.

As a result, "we will reach a point sometime in the near future where these improvements will necessarily be

built before somebody's project can be improved," Anderson said. That, or the council could be in a sticky spot of allowing more cars on Mount Hermon Road, in violation of city policy, he said.

Robin Cross, owner of Redo Consignment Furniture on Whispering Pines Drive, said her shop's easy accessibility from Highway 17 was "a big reason I picked this spot."

Cross said her store is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., so she misses the bulk of rush hour traffic and isn't sure the new turn lanes would help her customers as much as others.

Instead, Cross said, she would prefer to wait less at the lights farther down the street, where cars stop and go in front of Safeway, Nob Hill and Kmart.