

Controversial 40s-Style Transit Center Approved By Council

By PAUL BEATTY
Sentinel Staff Writer

Santa Cruz will get a new "moderne style" transit center and have the Pacific Garden Mall extended to Maple Street under a Metropolitan Transit District plan which was approved by the City Council Wednesday afternoon.

The council's 4-2 decision overturned the May 13 action of the city Zoning Board which decided after six hearings that it couldn't live with the design of the main building on the \$3 million project.

The building will front on Pacific Avenue and has the rounded appearance of many of the 1940's buildings that have since been re-facaded.

Councilmembers Mardi Wormhoudt, Spiro Mellis, Bruce Van Allen and Mayor Michael Rotkin, voted for approval of the design. Warmhoudt said, "I like it. It's kind of a period piece, kind of art deco like the Del Mar."

"That's the problem with it," Councilmember Joseph Ghio responded, "it's a replica of art deco, or rather moderne."

He said that instead of "a replica," the transit complex offered a chance for "Santa Cruz to have a striking piece of 1980's architecture." Ghio and John Laird voted against overturning the zoning board's decision and Councilmember John Mahaney was absent from proceedings.

Ghio said the architect should be encouraged to bloom to "full flower" in doing the project.

Mellis made no comment on the blooming architect, but said that since "Santa Cruz is already a hodge-podge of styles," the new depot building should mingle well enough.

Rotkin said he liked the design, but then he was in a defensive position as he serves on the transit board that approved the design. However, he abstained from a vote on the transit board, assuming he would end up

making a decision on the plan at the council level.

During most of the final hearing, the council appeared willing to send the project back to the zoning board for a seventh try, but that was finally seen as an exercise in futility.

The council had been urged by Anne Leonard, a zoning board member, to have the plans reviewed by outside design experts.

Leonard, speaking for herself and not the board, said the review should be done at the zoning board level, but that expert design opinion was needed.

She was asked by Mellis if it would do any good to have the transit district return for one more hearing at the board to see if differences could be reconciled, but Leonard said it didn't stand much of a chance without some outside help on design.

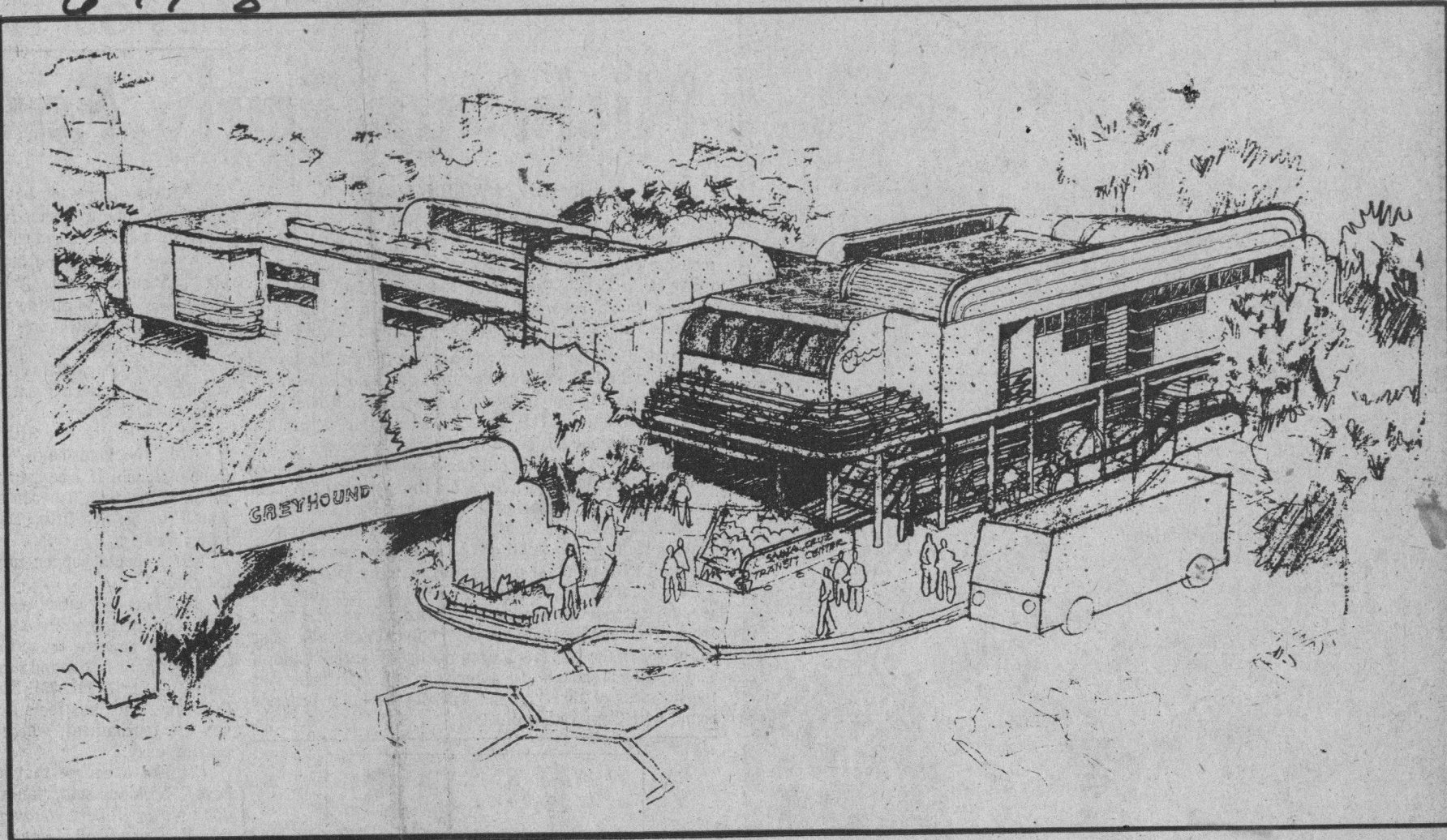
The council also was made aware of wider differences of opinion when Zoning Board member Bill Bagnall said there were much broader concerns, including the issue of whether the property between Pacific Avenue and Front Street was too small to do the job.

It is expected the complex could hold 20 buses which are waiting for passengers and some day could serve up to 1,800 people an hour. When it opens, the number of parked buses is expected to be around 14 with 1,200 people waiting in the open lobby and along the bus lanes.

The two-story building will house transit offices upstairs and commercial shops downstairs, including a restaurant.

The council expressed concerns about the restaurant having its trash collection center at the public doorway of the lobby and also about the city being willing to give up parking spaces on its adjoining lot so the transit center would have bicycle parking spaces.

In last minute actions, the council told the district it couldn't spend



Artist's rendering of the new Santa Cruz Transit Center

\$122,000 in street improvements, and that the money should come from new businesses which will draw on the hundreds of people who will collect in the area of the center.

Wormhoudt made it clear that no existing business should be assessed taxes, unless they significantly expand because of the new traffic.

In order to get money for traffic lights at the Front Street entrance,

the city was asked to transfer money from a road improvement project on Ocean Street while the transit district will move some of its funds to the Ocean Street project.

The transit funds will be taken from a park-and-ride project that was never completed in Capitola. Councilmembers made it clear they did not want to be indebted to Capitola for the exchange of funds since the transfer

of money was being done to benefit the bus district.

Laird said he opposed approval of the project at this time because there were unanswered questions and he did not like overturning the zoning board's action.

He also said he knew there was deep concern that the bus center building, as Leonard warned, wasn't worthy of a place on Pacific Garden Mall.

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