

Deer Park plans start through county maze

Plans for the Deer Park shopping center project in Rio del Mar were to be submitted to the county's environmental review committee (ERC) this week as a first step in the long permit process.

James Ellmore, who is designing the project, said the plans have already been reviewed by Chief Richard Chinn of the Aptos Fire District, who had some suggestions to make, but that "there are no big problems . . . nothing we can't work with" on that score.

Once ERC approval has been obtained—that could take about three weeks—Ellmore said he hopes to get a grading permit so the builders can begin preparing the site while applying for the building permit. Getting the building permit is expected to take about a month.

Ellmore said the detailed plans will be completed in about a month. Of them, he said, "I am very pleased with the design of the project. It will be a credit to the community."

The design "fulfills the original

commitment to the community," he said, referring to the promises made by the developers to area residents when seeking their support for the project in a series of meetings with improvement associations and other public groups.

"The design embraces the theme of the old barn on the hill," Ellmore said, "and everything is on a very human scale—very comfortable."

The Rio del Mar Improvement Association will get the first public look at the new plans when Ellmore appears before members at their April 6 meeting.

No target date has been set for construction, he said, but it is hoped that it will begin sometime in June.

As for the status of the Deer Park restaurant, the developers are still seeking an operator. Bryan Dawson, an official with Carl N. Swenson Co., developers of the shopping center, said Tuesday, "We are still talking to several people, and we hope to open up the restaurant first before getting the shopping center built."