

# Skyview remains a sweet deal

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SANTA CRUZ — The Scotts Valley auto center proposal may look like a good buy for the owners of nine Santa Cruz auto dealerships. But, the county Board of Supervisors willing, the owners of four of those dealerships — Santa Cruz Motors, Toyota of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Nissan-Dodge and North Bay Ford — still appear to have a better thing going for them across Highway 1 from Live Oak.

If the dealers move their businesses to Scotts Valley, they stand to pay \$5 to \$7.50 a

square foot for space in that city's proposed auto center. But under an agreement already negotiated between county officials and the dealership owners, the dealers would acquire the 14.51-acre Skyview Drive-In property on Soquel Drive for \$2.84 a square foot.

If the pending agreement between the dealers and the county over the Skyview property looks like a sweet deal in comparison to the Scotts Valley proposal, it looks even sweeter compared to what the dealers have already paid for a 3.82-acre parcel next to the drive-in property.

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## Skyview/ Drive-in a good buy

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The dealers bought that land this year in expectation of combining it with the Skyview site. They paid \$1.8 million for the property — \$10.81 a square foot.

Driving the dealers' Skyview land costs down is a provision in the proposed development agreement calling for the Live Oak-Soquel Redevelopment Agency to pay \$15 million of a \$16.8 million, 15-year lease-purchase deal between the dealership owners and drive-in owners Evelyn and Marvin Martins.

The land deal's cost to the Redevelopment Agency is \$23.73 a square foot.

The payoff — for the county general fund — is supposed to be tens of millions of dollars in sales tax revenues from the new auto center.

Hammered out by the dealers and County Administrative Officer George Newell's staff, the proposed agreement is on hold while staffers try to respond to questions raised about the deal at a Board of Supervisors hearing in late June.

Supervisors said then that they wanted more information about the projected sales-tax revenues, the

value of the Skyview land, and the legality of the proposed deal. They also told Newell and his staff to come up with proposals for relocating a popular flea market which operates at the Skyview on weekends.

Assistant County Administrative Officer Pat Busch said Tuesday that he will have answers to some of the board's questions by next week.

Busch also cautioned against cost comparisons between the county deal and the Scotts Valley auto center proposal.

"That's very hard to compare," he said, "because you don't know if you're doing apples and apples, or apples and oranges."

Busch said that while the Scotts Valley auto center land-cost figures

included the cost of public improvements like roads, the Skyview figures did not. He said that if they move to the Skyview site, the dealers would have to bear these costs on top of their land-acquisition costs.

"The (traffic) circulation costs and all those other things are pretty significant," said Busch, who could not recall cost estimates for public improvements at the Skyview site.

According to a set of preliminary plans for the Skyview auto center obtained by the Sentinel, the dealers are proposing to construct a divided, landscaped entrance way off Soquel Drive and a road around the perimeter of the drive-in property.