

CAPITOLA

PLANNING AND 1970
DEVELOPMENT 1984

Capitola Planners Certify Proposed Development's EIR

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel Staff Writer

The Capitola Planning Commission took the initial procedural step for the long-proposed Wharf Road Village development Thursday night by certifying the focused environmental impact report.

Commissioners stopped short, however, of recommending to the City Council that the General Plan be changed to the requested residential high density, preferring to wait for a full commission on Feb. 18. Only three members were present as Commissioners Jerry White and Craig Rowell were absent.

The Wharf Road Village proposal by applicants Irish Properties of San Jose includes five choices — the largest being 160 townhouses and 40,000 square feet of commercial office space. The 8½-acre parcel is located between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road, just south of Highway 1.

The General Plan question that must be resolved concerns an all-commercial, all-residential or combination of mixed uses.

Planning Director Dick Steele admitted there were "some problems" with any of the alternatives.

The existing all-commercial land use of the General Plan, for example, would quadruple traffic compared to an all-residential use.

"While all-commercial development would mean a substantial increase in tax revenues for the city," said Steele, "it would cause many more problems to the community than the extra revenue could solve."

Those problems would be centered on traffic. The EIR projected 9,900 daily vehicle trips for all-commercial, but only 878 for all-residential.

On the other hand, all-residential could put a "fiscal drain" on the city, according to Steele. The benefit would be providing housing for those employed in Capitola.

Jim Sims, developer for Irish Properties, acknowledged that while commercial would be

fiscally advantageous to the city, it would not be for them. "That is the reason we're requesting high density residential," he said.

That high density residential would allow between 15 and 20 units per acre, amounting to some 160 condominiums and townhouses, said Sims. They are also asking to retain the commercial designation on the property fronting 41st Avenue for some 40,000 square feet of office space.

Sims added that they wouldn't necessarily be coming in at the high end of the density range either. He maintained 17 units per acre would be adequate.

They were looking at a "large mix" of units with a median price range of about \$90,000, he said. Since the project is within the proposed boundaries of Capitola's Redevelopment Area it would also be required to have 15 percent of the units available to low- and moderate-income households.

Another question that would be mitigated during future studies, if the project is allowed to move forward, concerns the archaeological impact, assured Sims.

The parcel was once used as a summer campground by the Ohlone Indians, he explained. His archaeological consultant has already said the construction of Highway 1 cut through the site, but what is left could still be protected, pending future more detailed studies.

The water question, meanwhile, has apparently been answered. The entire parcel has been included within the city of Santa Cruz Water District rather than the Soquel Creek County Water District.

Only two persons from the public spoke during the hearing.

Jack Waits, a Clares Street resident, favored residential development at a low or medium density. Carl Wenzel, owner of adjacent Loma Vista Estates Mobile Home Park, brought up the storm drain problem in the area.

The General Plan portion of the public hearing was continued open to Feb. 18.