

Supervisors approve Aptos development plans

Aptos 2000
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✓ SANTA CRUZ — Long-running plans for a mixed-use town center — complete with a new county park and common area — cleared another hurdle Tuesday as the county Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the 11.5-acre development.

Construction on the phased project could begin in the spring and be completed by 2014. But that depends on how long it takes to complete the last two steps: getting improvement plans and a final map approved, then obtaining building permits, said senior planner Randall Adams.

The project conforms with the Aptos Village Plan, a general plan that

first was approved in 1979, then was revised and approved again in 2010 to provide the framework for the Barry Swenson Builder development. That approval came after numerous community meetings in which residents stated they wanted a walkable, liveable area filled with places to shop, dine and other amenities, as well as a common area for social gatherings.

"I'm really glad that there was so much support and that people really appreciate the work that was put into it by everyone," Adams said after the meeting. "This actually is a development project that came from the community and was realized by the developer cooperating with the county."

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Bordered by Soquel and Cathedral drives and Trout Gulch and Aptos Creek roads, the project will include nine buildings with commercial and residential components, including 12 affordable housing units. It will also have nearly 500 parking spaces, a large common area, stormwater features and three-quarters of an acre that eventually will become a new county park.

Barry Swenson has the option of building a second "anchor" store on the western edge of the development, a modification related to railroad crossings in the area.

Last year, the county requested permission from the state Public Utilities Commission to make improvements at the existing railroad crossings at Aptos Creek and Trout Gulch roads, and the construction of a third. At the time, the railroad was owned by Union Pacific, which had an operating agreement with Sierra Northern Railway.

Both companies opposed the improvement plans, but the issue is now moot. The county pulled its application after the line was sold to the Regional Transportation Commission, and it will be resubmitted once a new operator is selected, 2nd District Supervisor Ellen Pirie said after the meeting.

If the application is turned down, she added, "that would affect the viability of the village," so having a second anchor store would help ensure its success.

The plan also involves moving the historic Apple Barn from Trout Gulch Road to the village common, demolishing the Aptos Firehouse/VFW Hall, and building two new roads.

The development will likely be built in two phases, with the first, yearlong phase involving moving the Apple Barn and creating the village green area, said Mary Gourlay, development project manager with Barry Swenson Builder.

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