

Capitola mail

Capitola OKs shopping center

City Council grants nearby residents concessions from developer

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CAPITOLA — The last major shopping center in the 41st Avenue commercial corridor was approved Tuesday night.

The City Council gave a unanimous nod of approval to 130,000 square feet of stores on Clares Street, across from J.C. Penney.

But the OK wasn't given without taking into consideration nearby residents, some whose back yards will be about 40 feet from the back of the stores.

To protect residents, the council imposed a set of conditions which Councilman Ron Graves termed "extraordinary."

In addition to numerous conditions already recommended by city staff, the council Tuesday added the following:

- The road between the back of the main strip of stores and residences shall be one way and a maximum of 20 feet wide. This road will be used by delivery vehicles.

- Four feet will be added to the landscaped buffer between the homes and the delivery road. This was made possible by reducing the 24-foot, two-way delivery road to 20 feet. (The homes also will be buffered by a 10-foot wall.)

- At the suggestion of the project's architect Scott Hetz, an enclosed loading area will be constructed between two of the buildings in the main strip of stores.

- An electronically controlled gate will be installed at either end of the delivery road behind the main strip of stores.

- Hours of delivery and garbage collection will be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. The council changed this condition from the originally proposed hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

It's the last major center in the 41st Avenue corridor.

- No storage will be allowed at the back of the buildings except in enclosed garbage disposal areas.

Although the council approved the project, the landscaping and lighting plans still must come before the council before building permits will be given.

The council met Tuesday with the developers of the former Brown Bulb Ranch site and their architects to iron out some problems council members had with the plans. They were particularly concerned that delivery trucks at the back of the center would disturb nearby neighborhoods.

The meeting was scheduled after the council couldn't come to a decision at last week's regular council meeting.

Two different developers will be building on the 13 acres, but the city insisted that the developments be approved as one project.

Brown Properties, owners of the former Brown Bulb Ranch, is planning 104,000 square feet of stores on 9½ acres. This includes the main strip of stores and one separate building.

Some of the stores planned are a Pier 1 Imports and a Trader Joe's specialty grocery.

The other developer, Roth Properties, plans

to build Kiddie World Toys and Kiddie World Furniture stores. The current Kiddie World Toys on Bay Avenue would relocate to the Clares Street site.

Residents whose properties border the commercial property pushed hard for the council to cut down on noise the center will generate.

Bill Hall, whose Lotman Drive home borders the site, said of the council's decision, "It looks like they have tried to take our concerns into consideration and have worked out a compromise."

"I would have liked to have seen the project pulled back farther from the homes, but we can probably live with the restrictions. And we got a little extra landscaping, too."

Live Oak Supervisor Jan Beautz also was concerned about the project because some of the nearby homes are in the unincorporated area.

"If I had my choice, I would have redesigned it from a long strip of stores, but given that they are keeping that design, this is probably a workable solution," Beautz said after the meeting.

"I think the residents still care about how close the buildings are, but no way can you have a project this close and not have impacts," Beautz added. "The gates are a good idea and limits on delivery times are a good idea."

Barclay Brown of Brown Properties appeared relieved after the final vote. But, he said, his worries are not yet over.

"I am pleased we are over this hurdle, but we have a lot more hurdles yet," he said. "We are open to inquiries from people who are interested in being merchants. That is the next hurdle."