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Accepts Impact Report

Capitola Wants 41st Center Expanded

By TOM HONIG

Sentinel Staff Writer

It's not official yet, but it appears as though the Capitola City Council is planning for an expansion of the big shopping center near 41st Avenue and Capitola Road.

At its regular meeting Monday, the council voted to accept an environmental impact report regarding a zoning change in the area next to Capitola Mall which would allow more big stores. The council shied away from giving all-out approval to the zoning change, but the councilmen present indicated that they like the idea.

At issue is a 16-acre land parcel next to the Capitola Mall shopping center. Currently, those 16 acres are zoned for apartments and condominiums, but the city fathers have expressed interest in changing the zoning to allow at least one more big department store to occupy that land. If that happened, of course, the city would benefit from sales tax revenue generated by the store — or stores.

Currently, there are two big department stores along 41st Avenue — Sears and Mervyn's. A host of smaller shops occupy

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the indoor Capitola Mall, and plans are under way by Sutter Hill developers to build a smaller shopping center which would include a Lucky's food store and other smaller shops.

This 16-acre parcel considered by the council on Monday would be in addition to the other developments.

By accepting the environmental impact report, the council, in effect, said that any ill-effects from having another shopping center could be solved. For example, the environmental impact report, prepared by Charles Delk and Associates of Walnut Creek, indicated that problems resulting from an increase in traffic from a shopping center could be solved.

In the report, Delk and Associates say that an increased dependence on mass transit, and the construction of a road behind the proposed shopping center would solve the traffic problem.

The council also agreed that the loss in housing caused by the zoning change could possibly be compensated by approving similar housing zones in other areas of the city.

The council, however, stopped short of giving its approval to the change. Councilman Ron Graves said that before he would vote on such a major zoning change, he would like to see the exact wording of how that change would be entered into the books. "I'm not adequately prepared with the material I have to vote," he said.

Consequently, the city staff and Delk and Associates were called on to report back to the council as to the exact wording of the zoning change. After they do, the council will again consider the matter.

The area in question does not lie in the coastal zone, so the council's decision regarding the change in zoning will be a final action.