

Three firms trying for Watsonville redevelopment bid

By JAMIE MARKS
Sentinel Staff Writer

11-11-87

WATSONVILLE — Three developers are now vying for the right to redevelop Main Street's 200 block.

In presentations to the City Council, which was sitting as the Redevelopment Agency Tuesday night, Bill Peters of Carmel's Monterey Bay Development Co., Jay Paul of the Jay Paul Co. of Los Gatos, and Lisa Bullen of Barry Swenson Builders of San Jose, outlined their visions for the 2.2-acre site.

The trio were asked to submit detailed resumes, financial statements, schematic drawings of their projects and brief descriptions of their proposals by Dec. 1. The negotiating team of City Manager John Radin, Mayor Betty Murphy and councilmen Tony Campos and Rex Clark will review them and make a recommendation to the council.

A final agreement with Swenson has failed to materialize after nearly a year of exclusive negotiations. The deadline for a contract expired in September and talks since then have been mired in financial disputes. The council met in closed session briefly Tuesday, but took no action on Swenson's latest plan.

The most ambitious proposal was unveiled by Peters, who has visions of a three- to five-story building enclosing a fresh-produce market on the first floor, 350-space parking garage underground, and as many as 200 apartments above the 60,000-square-foot commercial area.

Peters also proposed day-care facilities on every floor

of his center and extensive landscaping throughout. He didn't offer a plan to finance the project but said that "the terms of negotiations you are offering (Swenson) are quite fair and acceptable to us."

If Peters was floating a dream for all to see, then Paul pierced it with a dose of reality.

"I think a lot of his ideas are incredibly good for downtown San Francisco, but not for downtown Watsonville," said Paul.

Although Paul said a combination of 40,000 square feet of commercial area and about 46 housing units could be economically feasible, he doubted an underground garage could be built at a price that would be "sensitive to the economy of the area."

"You can tell of playgrounds and can do a lot of wishful thinking, but you have to really address what's realistic," he said.

As proof of his commitment, Paul brought Leonard McVicar, an architect with the San Francisco firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, to speak about designs and cost estimates.

McVicar, who has worked on Ghirardelli Square and several other huge San Francisco projects, said underground parking usually costs about \$20,000 per space, adding that trying to make residential units affordable at that rate "makes economic nonsense."

Paul, who has the Pajaro Hills Shopping Center at Green Valley Road and Main Street pending before the council Nov. 24, also criticized Swenson's plan, said I
"What was originally proposed was a strip cen

think downtown deserves better."

He said that in peddling the Pajaro Hills development, he's found many businesses willing to locate in downtown, too.

Peters has been courting support for his plan from various local groups, including the non-profit El Pajaro/Community Development Corp.

But El Pajaro executive director Mark Frederickson fell short of endorsing Peters' plan. In a letter to the council, Frederickson said he supports in concept a residential and commercial mix, and would work to obtain

up to \$625,000 in community development block-grant funds to lend to businesses relocating into the redevelopment area.

Bullen didn't present a proposal, other than the preliminary building layout which was submitted a year ago when the council picked Swenson to negotiate.

"As you know, we have been working on a financial package, and we were hoping to get input from the agency on a design," she said. Instead of reviewing the proposal, Bullen presented a promotional videotape about the Swenson company.