

development assistance but was turned down because of improper zoning.

“I’m not necessarily here to endorse this project or to speak against it,” said Sam Nigh of the former Nigh Lumber. “If the Board is willing to take redevelopment dollars and put them into a project like this, we would ask that you use the same funds to do a study on our property.”

Nigh, who owns 15 acres on the other side of freeway across from the Skyview Drive-in, has made several attempts in recent years to use his property for an auto plaza or to attract a box store like Home Depot. His attempts have been stymied because of improper zoning.

Nigh has been trying to get his property rezoned from light industrial to a commercial retail designation. Burns and Supervisor Jan Beautz have opposed the change, deciding that it would be inconsistent with the General Plan. Nigh acknowledged during the meeting that county officials have heard his arguments in the past and did not agree with him, but he would like another study conducted by outside experts.

“A proper study has not been

done to rezone us,” Nigh said.

### **Bonanza, or Bust**

The RDA projected annual sales from the shopping complex could reach \$41 million, generating up to \$745,000 through sales and property taxes for county coffers each year. Additionally, Burns estimated at the hearing that up to 200 new jobs would be created once the development is completed. Opponents counter that they would essentially be minimum wage jobs.

Symons was curious whether the businesses that would move in would in fact improve the job prospects for area residents.

“What kind of jobs are replacing those that would be moving,” Symons asked. “I think that is a salient point.”

Ottinger doesn’t believe the jobs that would be created are comparable to what his business provides now. Ottinger said the dental practice employs 20 people and pays them three to four times above the minimum wage.

Burns predicted that, given the assistance the RDA will make available to disrupted businesses, few if any of the existing jobs would be lost in the relocation

process.

### **Missing**

Noticeably absent from the meeting were representatives from Dominican Hospital. County officials are asking the hospital to move their main entranceway in a separate request unrelated to the Commercial Way shopping complex.

Although hospital officials agreed to the change in discussions initiated over two years ago, Dominican vice president Ed Fayen said hospital administrators have concerns regarding the retail center and the amount of traffic it will generate. Plans show the entrance to the retail center opposite the entrance to the hospital.

“We don’t have a problem with moving the entrance,” Fayen said. “But regardless of the movement of the entrance, the issue of the impact of the traffic from the retail center is something we’re unsure of.”

A preliminary study commissioned by the RDA determined that there are no traffic concerns related to the redevelopment of the site which are “insurmountable.” □