

Local

VISION SANTA
CRUZ

'Vision' of SC starts to focus

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SANTA CRUZ — The work of "Vision Santa Cruz" is starting to become a bit more focused.

Consultants outlined what they believed they were hearing from the public in terms of general goals for rebuilding the downtown after a flurry of public workshops, Friday, Saturday and once again Sunday.

Vision Santa Cruz is a committee of 36 people who will give recommendations to the City Council on rebuilding downtown in the wake of the Oct. 17 earthquake.

"What we're really doing today is laying the groundwork (for the redesign and rebuilding)," said Donlyn Lyndon, of Berkeley-based Lyndon/Buchanan and Associates.

More than 100 people came to the Santa Cruz High School gymnasium to hear what he and his team of a dozen consultants had come up with thus far after listening to and reading comments from the public.

The goal is to have a basic framework of community preferences in a written progress report by March 19, Lyndon said.

Lyndon praised members of the community for their "eagerness" to share in the planning process.

The fundamental premise that is guiding the work, he said, is that "places that attract affection encourage citizenship."

"And I must say the affection we've seen for downtown Santa Cruz is a good sign for the future," he said.

Consulting team member Randy Hester said the goal of designing the mall's landscape and public space would be to reflect the diversity of the community.

"I see it as being rich and participatory," he said. "People could give plants. Children could come and have special plantings of their own. It would be a garden that services the community, residents and recreation and begin to tie functions together that at present are very separate."

Hester described the concept as "extending the walking garden" by looking at including not only Pacific Avenue but nearby neglected areas as well.

"The existing situation is that of

only remnants," he said. "In some places it looks like nobody gave a damn. You don't have to go very far for the greenness of the garden to break down.

"There are large areas where there is not a sense of caring and the idea is to make connections to the beach, the residential areas, the river, and encourage the economic use of downtown."

As an example he pointed to the possible development of a more hospitable way for pedestrians to get from the County Government Center to downtown.

"We could get more people at the county building to spend money downtown," he said.

He said preliminary plans call for designing both small courtyards at various points around the mall, similar to the one that existed at Bookshop Santa Cruz prior to the quake and also larger plaza-style public spaces such as that which existed in front of the Cooper House.

"What we want to know is when you say a plaza, what size are you talking about," he said. "For instance, when you say the Embarcadero to San Franciscans it conjures up images of several acres of concrete and pavement. About how big do you want yours to be and what would you like to be able to do there?"

One idea, Hester said, is to close Cooper Street and use that as the public space.

"It is clear for that public space to work it needs ground floor commercial space around it," he said. "If there's no place to buy coffee it just wouldn't be used."

Conference participants were given a one-page form where they were asked to list their most important comments regarding such issues as land use, housing, guidelines for building design, the garden concept, traffic circulation patterns and tentative goals.

And they were also challenged to come up with more immediate goals.

"Something that can be done right away," Hester said. "Something to show the world we are rebuilding and taking it on right now."