

# Local



3-8-85

A-2—Santa Cruz

## Capitola Auto Row nears final approval

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel Staff Writer

CAPITOLA — Capitola's proposed Auto Row may be less than a week away from final approval.

The Auto Row proposal calls for four Santa Cruz auto dealers, representing 10 makes of cars, to move to Capitola.

The City Council will hear the proposal Thursday — complete with a recommendation for approval from the Planning Commission. Commissioners recommended approval Thursday night after more than two hours of discussion.

Auto Row is the second-largest project in city history, ranked behind Capitola Mall. The 10-acre parcel next to Highway 1 between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road is the largest remaining vacant parcel in Capitola.

Applicant Gary Reece of DaPont Construction of Santa Cruz told The Sentinel after the meeting Thursday that — assuming council approval next week — grading work would begin 10 days after that on the \$6 to \$8 million project.

"We're hoping for an eight-month construction schedule," Reece said. "The dealers would definitely like to be in by the end of the year."

Dealer number one, to be located closest to 41st Avenue and the entrance off an extension of Gross Road, would be Marina Pontiac-Cadillac-Buick at 120,619 square feet. Santa Cruz Porsche-Audi-Isuzi would be adjacent at 94,992 square feet. Santa Cruz British Jaguar-Subaru is proposed at 69,524 square feet and Roy Baldwin Oldsmobile-AMC would be closest to Wharf Road and the largest dealership at 132,314 square feet.

The dealerships are expected to generate more than \$100,000 a year for Capitola.

While Reece was pleased with the process so far, he added, "The city definitely hasn't rolled over."

The Planning Commission had a list of 40 detailed conditions of approval that must be met. Concessions by dealers have involved the elimination of auto body repair and mechanical painting facilities at Santa Cruz British Motors and Roy

Baldwin — the two closest to Loma Vista Estates Mobile Home Park — because of noise and odor concerns. An eight-foot-high acoustical sound wall has been redesigned to 10 feet, and outside public address speakers on the lots have been prohibited for noise control. Roof design of the front of buildings also will be modified.

One of the dealers' key proposals was specifically prohibited by commissioners. It involved a "Capitola Auto Plaza" clock tower/sign at the entrance to the project. A 40-foot-high "landmark" tower that the dealers pushed hard for as an identification symbol did not sway commissioners, who would not approve a variance of the city's 16-foot-high sign ordinance.

The dealers also lost out on a rear garage door to Roy Baldwin Motors' repair shop. Commissioners denied the door proposal due to noise that would affect residents of the nearby Loma Vista Estates Mobile Home Park.

The commission, meanwhile, had no jurisdiction on a \$210,000 concern. Presently, \$210,000 is required by the applicant as a contribution to the 41st Avenue Traffic Improvement Fund for future traffic improvements.

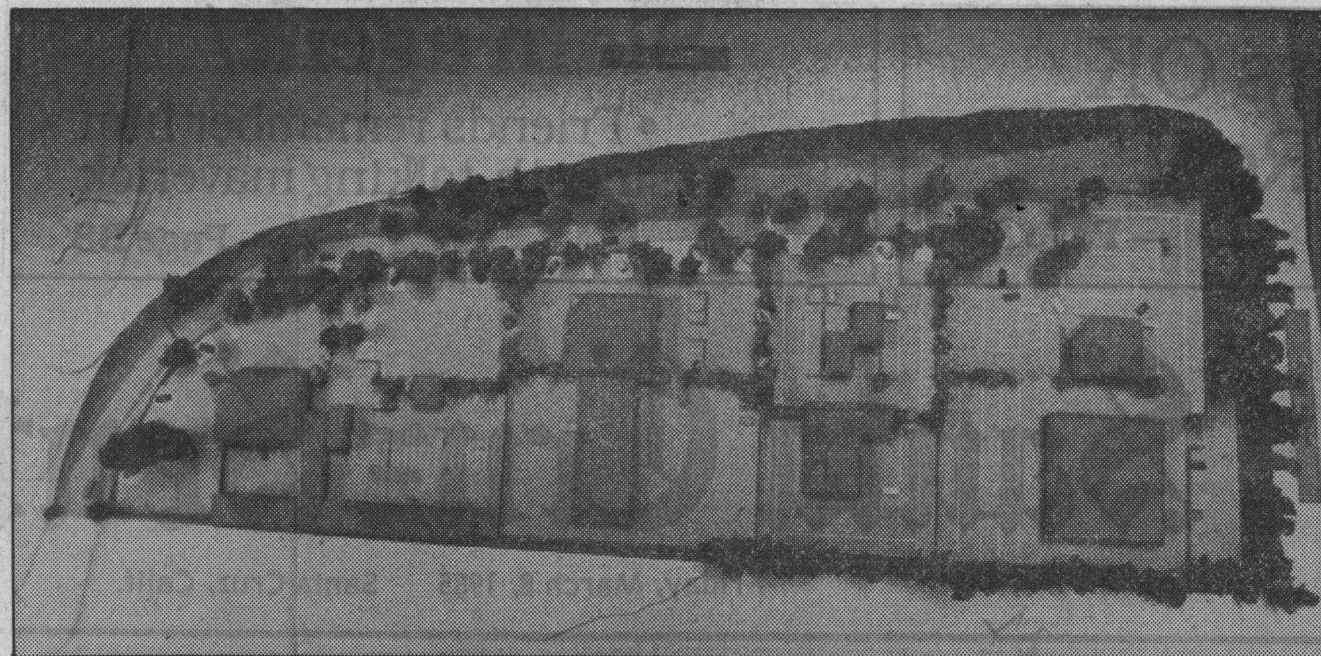
Reece argued that traffic engineers hired for an environmental impact report said the impact of project traffic was "minimal" compared to other uses that could be proposed on the site. "With that traffic fee, the economics of it (the project) are not workable at this time," he said.

Commissioners did not react to the fee, instead saying they would leave that up to the council. The council has jurisdiction, sitting as the Capitola Redevelopment Agency, which takes in 41st Avenue traffic improvements.

Reece said later that he would request a lowering of that traffic fee Thursday. He is also hopeful the rear garage door can be overruled by the council, as long as he can prove noise levels can be controlled. The "landmark" clock tower/sign will also return at a future date, he added — "in another form."

Commissioners did not consider the proposed clock tower a "landmark," as Reece did. Commissioner Marilyn Crenshaw called it, "a sad excuse for a landmark."

However, commissioners also did not absolutely prohibit a 40-foot-high entrance



Model of Auto Row on display at Planning Commission meeting.

sign proposal returning to them at a later date. Commission Chairman Rick Karleen said they would be willing to reconsider it, "if it could be done aesthetically pleasing."

Reece and the auto dealers did, however, win a major point concerning proposed drainage facilities to handle the auto center's storm drainage runoff. That runoff is proposed to go into Soquel Creek after filtering through a double-chamber filtration system.

Commissioner Bill Fisher was

adamantly against draining water into the creek, which he described as "Capitola's public swimming pool." He was concerned that solvents and chemicals used by the dealers could find its way into the creek. Fisher proposed the project's drainage be piped toward 41st Avenue instead.

Planning Director Steve Russell explained that the Zone 5 Drainage Control Board, which encompasses mid-county, would not allow the eastern half of the project — which slopes toward Soquel

Creek — to drain toward 41st Avenue.

Russell proposed an additional condition that called for monitoring of the drainage system including compiling of a list of chemicals that may be used by the dealers. A testing program would be required to identify trapped substances in the filtration system to insure prohibited chemicals are not being used. The condition was unanimously added by the commission.

The public hearing by the City Council will be heard at 7 p.m. Thursday in the council chamber at City Hall.