

Council decides on land purchases

Pacific Ave Rittenhouse property looks doubtful for downtown plaza

By **DARREL W. COLE**
Sentinel staff writer

9-23-99

SANTA CRUZ — The natural history museum might finally get a new home and the city will get a new athletic field, but a proposed plaza at the Rittenhouse property downtown doesn't seem to have enough council votes.

The Santa Cruz City Council agreed late Tuesday to move ahead with plans to buy the Lighthouse Liquors site at 101 Washington St. for use as a natural history museum.

That parcel would complement the city's recent purchase of 6.2 acres known as the old depot site, which includes a four-acre transportation area for buses, parking spaces and bike and pedestrian paths. The new site would also include an athletic field and a children's play area.

The council also decided to try to buy the Rittenhouse property at Church Street and Pacific Avenue for a downtown plaza. But since that action came on a 4-3 vote, it's a bad sign for plaza supporters.

The Rittenhouse family doesn't want to sell and five votes are required before the city can take the property through its power of eminent domain.

Voting for the plaza idea were Mayor Katherine Beiers and council members Tim Fitzmaurice, Christopher Krohn and Keith Sugar. Opposed were Michael Hernandez, Cynthia Mathews and Mike Rotkin.

Council members said they also want information about using a parking lot at Front and Cathcart streets for possible use as a downtown plaza.

On a 4-3 vote, the council also elected to move ahead on a purchase of a 14,767-square-foot parking lot between the West Cliff Drive trestle bridge and Pacific Avenue across from the Municipal Wharf. The site is the former home of the Fun Spot and is not for sale.

At a future meeting, the council will consider the possibility of buying Union Pacific Railroad property that separates Neary Lagoon Park from the old depot site. Part of that property is leased by the city for use as a wharf maintenance yard.

Also by a 4-3 vote, the council chose not to consider buying the Santa Cruz Feed and Mercantile property at 123 Center St.