

Pacific plan wins approval

PACIFIC GARDEN MALL 10/17/89 -

Panel agrees on mall traffic

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SANTA CRUZ — Plans for a 25-foot-wide sidewalk on the sunny side of Pacific Avenue to accommodate outdoor restaurants and flower stalls were endorsed Thursday by an advisory committee of business owners, city officials and public representatives.

The sidewalk, twice the normal width, is considered innovative in downtown design, according to consultants, Wallace, Roberts and Todd of San Francisco. The west side of the street would have 15-foot sidewalks.

Also on a straw vote, the committee appointed by the City Council endorsed a plan to allow traffic to enter Pacific Avenue from both the north and south.

Traffic would enter from Water Street and proceed south to Locust, where a new city parking structure is planned.

Traffic also would enter from Laurel and travel one-way northbound to Church Street. A one-block, two-way section from Church to Locust would allow traffic from both directions to exit onto Cooper Street to Front.

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Agreement

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The agreement came late in a five-hour-long meeting after a heated debate over whether to return two-way traffic to Pacific Avenue, as it was before the mall was built in 1970.

The meeting was called so the advisory committee could give further direction to consultants hired to draft the city's downtown redevelopment and Pacific Avenue streetscape plans.

As they have in so many planning sessions, two key issues — traffic and trees — dominated the discussion.

Retailers continue to call for two-way traffic, more on-street traffic and fewer trees.

"If I were a movie critic, I'd give you one star," Outdoor World owner Bob Thomas told the consultants.

"We've said repeatedly that the area must emphasis retail, yet you're emphasizing the beauty and serenity of the trees," he said. "We need more parking."

Thomas went on to sound this warning: "I predict that if we don't make the right decisions about downtown Santa Cruz there will be another regional shopping center in Santa Cruz in the next 15 years."

The right decisions, he said, would include two lanes of traffic and 50 to 60 percent fewer trees. "Trees don't put money in the cash register," he said.

UC Santa Cruz Professor Jim Pepper disagreed.

"Retailing is important, but so is the love and affection of the community," he countered. He called Pacific Avenue "our public living room."

The quality of the public spaces,

Pepper said, would be a key to successful retailing, too.

The consultants have recommended planting fewer trees than on the mall and arranging them in two lines down a straightened-out avenue.

The first line, closest to the street, would consist of large trees, such as white ash, London Plane or American Linden, spaced 50 feet apart. The second line of smaller, flowering trees would be interspaced at 50-foot intervals.

Following a lengthy discussion of what kinds and how many trees should be planted, Mayor Jane Yokoyama recommended that the spacing of trees could be flexible so they would not interfere with the visibility of storefronts.

Yokoyama, along with most advisory members, were not enthusiastic about the consultant's proposal to adopt a nautical theme, based on the name Pacific Avenue.

Wallace, Roberts and Todd recommended a wave pattern sandblasted into the paving and the same theme carried over to park benches, fencing and trash receptacles and figures of dolphins and porpoises on light standards.

Yokoyama called the proposal "a little too provocative." A theme would be fine, she said, "but we don't want to overdo it by making it cutesy," she said.

That will be one of a number of things the consultants will take back to the drawing boards before the proposal advances to public hearings in December.

An ambitious timetable calls for the redevelopment plan to go before the City Council on Jan. 8. Major revisions however, could push that date back.