

PACIFIC GARDEN MALL
Sweeping

SJM 9-3-91 1F

recovery plan OK'd

Vision Santa Cruz sends final draft to council

By Paul Rogers
Mercury News Staff Writer

Working past midnight and into early Tuesday morning, Vision Santa Cruz approved the sweeping plan for downtown Santa Cruz's rebirth and sent it to the city council for final approval with only minor recommendations for change.

The 36-member advisory group, charged with including citizens from all walks of life in the rebuilding process, endorsed the final draft of the ROMA Design Group's Downtown Recovery Plan.

For five hours late Monday, the document was at the center of a spirited town meeting among city leaders, planning consultants and 150 local residents.

"I think we got some good direction," said city planner Laura Perry, who manages the Vision Santa Cruz storefront at the north end of Pacific Avenue.

Council approval expected

The recovery plan, commissioned in October for \$260,000, was completed Friday. It is up for final city council approval Tuesday. If approved without major changes, as is widely expected, some of its recommendations on housing, building sizes, parking and landscaping will be written into city ordinances.

Some portions, such as traffic direction and tree selection, will take effect later this year and early in 1992 as the city begins to rebuild streets and sidewalks downtown.

Other sections of the plan, such as long-term proposals for light-rail service and an outdoor riverside amphitheater, will form conceptual outlines for future planning.

Vision Santa Cruz board members, who noted they "proudly and enthusiastically" endorsed the plan, suggested the council make the following changes:

Changes proposed by board

✓ The city provide ample bicycle parking on every block.

✓ The city should make every effort to save existing trees, rather than tearing them out for replacement with one uniform species, as consultants have suggested. New trees that are planted should be diverse.

✓ Loosen language in the plan requiring building setbacks outside the Cooper House and Ford's Department Store site. The setbacks, which have been suggested as possible outdoor cafe sites, were criticized by a Ford's spokesman Monday as too restrictive. Ford's has not made a final decision about whether to return to downtown Santa Cruz. The concession was seen as a signal the city is willing to accommodate the longtime retail anchor store.

✓ Include language in the plan allowing for Pacific Avenue's eventual conversion to a pedestrian-only venue. After several members of the public had criticized the plan as too auto-dominated, board member Jim Pepper, a college professor, successfully sponsored an amendment recommending that the street be "sufficiently flexible to allow for exclusive use as a pedestrian street at a future date if the vitality of downtown retail recovery and public desire so warrant."