

Yugoslav group offering to buy Marinovich Bldg.

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

The beginning of Watsonville's long-talked-about International Village may soon become reality. And the plan may save the 81-year-old Marinovich Building.

The plan is being espoused by Councilman Vido Deretich, who appears to be on his way to becoming a born-again historical preservationist. (See story at right.)

Deretich would like to see Wells Fargo Bank, which has plans to tear down the Marinovich Building for additional parking spaces, sell the Victorian structure to the Yugoslav-American Cultural Organization of Watsonville. The organization, said Deretich, wants to buy the building.

Under the proposal, which was presented by Deretich this morning to Jim Radich of the Wells Fargo Bank, the Old Steam Roller portion of the building would be demolished, as would the shed behind the building, thereby allowing Wells Fargo to get more parking without having to tear down the main structure. (Both the shed and Old Steam Roller portion were added on to the original building, which was constructed in 1899.)

Deretich said this morning that he has contacted a leader of the Yugoslav-American organization, Andy Gulermovich, and that he's all for the idea. Both men would like to see the bottom floor of the building turned into an Adriatic nightclub. The top floor would be used for the organization's offices and meeting rooms.

Along with his alternative to demolition of the building, Deretich gave Radich a parking plan drawn up by Chuck Rowe, a leader in the fight to save the building.

Under Rowe's plan, the Old Steam Roller portion of the building would remain, but the shed behind it would be torn down. Using the same 9-foot by 19-foot parking spaces provided in Wells Fargo's parking plan, Rowe was able to fit in 28 parking spaces. The bank's plans called for adding 18 spaces to the existing 18-space lot. Thus, according to Rowe, demolition of the building would create eight new parking spaces.

Rowe's plan assumes that the Wells Fargo parking lot attendant would no longer park his car in the bank lot, as he does now.

Rowe's plan also includes a landscaped walkway behind the Marinovich Building as well as a large "monument-type" Wells Fargo sign, which would perhaps feature a picture of the bank's famous stage-coach.

"It (the sign) would create a nice frame for the plaza," Rowe explained this morning.

A key part of providing more parking for the bank under Rowe's plan is the use of Peck Street. Rowe, a planner by profession, said that six more parallel parking spaces could be provided on the south side of the street, with four more diagonal spaces on the north side of the street. The latter would be accomplished by changing the width of the parking

The reason behind Deretich's switch

When Vido Deretich ran for City Council two years ago, he had nothing but nasty things to say about old buildings. And as little as two months ago, he called the renovated Mansion House "a barn."

But now the towering, personable city councilman is the historical preservationists' Man of the Hour.

What happened?

"It (historical preservation) is the trend of the community," Deretich explained this morning. "And I'm going to follow it."

In the past, he said, "I didn't think it was (the trend). I was wrong."

Deretich said he felt the Marinovich Building issue was tearing the community apart and wanted to see a "fair solution" worked out to the problem.

His credentials?

Deretich jokingly rattled them off. "Degrees: None. City and state licenses: None. Main office: Table No. 2 of the Del Monte Cafe."

He added that he wanted to help get the issue, which is now tied up in the Court of Appeal in



VIDO DERETICH

San Francisco, out of legal hands.

"Attorneys have no common sense as far as I'm concerned," he said. "That's just the way I feel."

spaces from 12½ feet to 9 feet.

Under Rowe's plan, the number of spaces in the bank lot and Peck Street would be 59 — two more than demolition of the building (with no alterations on Peck Street) would provide.

Rowe calculated that tearing down the Steam Roller portion of the bar would produce three more parking spaces.

Both Deretich and Rowe would also like to see the city consider either increasing the time on the 24-minute Peck Street meters or eliminating the meters altogether — the reasoning being that many Wells Fargo customers don't like leaving their cars on Peck Street because of the risk of getting a ticket or because of the cost.

City Public Works Director John Cooper said this morning that the 12½-foot spaces on Peck could be trimmed in width, but he would recommend that they be reduced by no more than 1½ feet, to prevent people from bumping their car doors. That would increase the diagonal parking by probably two spaces.

The city now has four parallel-parking spaces on the south side of Peck adjacent to the Wells Fargo Building, but has no spaces on the rest of the street. Cooper said it may be possible to increase the number of spaces, but that might increase traffic congestion somewhat and make the street more hazardous.

Deretich said he asked Radich, who promised to get back to Deretich after talking to officials of the bank's San Francisco office, to give the Yugoslav-American organization "first right of refusal" if the bank decides to sell the building, assuming the bank doesn't have any other commitments as far as selling the property.

Deretich joked that if the nightclub were ever to become a reality, it would be an "equal opportunity employer." He suggested that the club make Bill Marinovich (who sold the building to Wells Fargo) the bouncer, Rafael Radovich the maitre d', Peter Violich the chef, Nick Derpich and Vince Kovacich the waiters, and Roger Hoffman (renovator of the Mansion House) the maintenance man.

Historical buffs this morning reacted with enthusiasm to Deretich's proposal.

"It would be perfect — absolutely fantastic," said Pat Pirtle of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. If the plan succeeds, she said, "Vido will be a hero."

"He's one of the first city council members to take a personal interest in something, and try to solve a problem rather than being negative," Mrs. Pirtle added. "God bless him."

Rowe said he likes "the plan a whole lot," joking that he hopes the nightclub will "let the Scottish in on occasion."

REFERENCE



Photo by Sam Vestal

Sharon Begley (standing, center) of the Historical Assn. told Nancy Bartels' Radcliff second-grade class about the Marinovich building this morning.