

# SV auto plaza stalls

AUTO PLAZA  
Scotts  
Valley

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SCOTTS VALLEY — A proposal to build an auto center in north Scotts Valley has hit a snag, with a group of car dealers claiming the peaked roofs and fancy paving the city wants will be too expensive.

Five Santa Cruz car dealers agreed last year to relocate to Scotts Valley and the city put the project on a fast track, aiming to have signed development agreements in hand by March 1.

The deadline will not be met, but both sides say the project is not dead.

"It's still alive," said car dealer Lee Courtwright. "I sure hope it is, because I've got no place else to go, and I want to go. The problems are major, but they're solvable."

City Administrator August Caires said a final agreement could be reached within two weeks.

"They have balked at some of the design elements, but we haven't reached impasse," he said. "The sticking points have to do with the expense and the beauty of the project. We hope we can reach a compromise."

Scotts Valley has agreed to build entrance roads, fountains, a plaza, display area and amphitheater, and parking areas for the auto center. The car dealers are responsible for building their own facilities, as long as they conform to the city's strict guidelines.

The guidelines are intended to make the project blend in with surrounding homes and prevent business activity from disturbing the neighbors.

The dealers have balked at standards prohibiting flat roofs and asphalt paving in any area visible to the public. The city wants peaked roofs and some kind of textured paving. According to city consultant Mike D'Amico, the difference amounts to 5 to 7 percent of the project cost.

To city negotiators, the two points are relatively minor details. The dealers feel the costs involved are too high, but were not willing to say how much the costs would be.

"I think it's up to the dealers," Caires said. "If they want a plaza anywhere in the county, this is the most viable alternative available to them. They've been trying (to build an auto center) for 20 years."

The Scotts Valley project, proposed for a freeway-frontage site near the abandoned Santa's Village amusement park, is the only surviving proposal of several that have surfaced over the past few years. At least three other auto center proposals in the county have been killed by an onslaught of community opposition.

The River Street auto plaza in Santa Cruz was opposed by businesses that would have been razed to make way for it, as well as by environmentalists who objected to building on the banks of the San Lorenzo River.

Plans to build at the Skyview Drive-in theater were buried by opposition from hundreds of flea market merchants and shoppers. The flea market operates on the drive-in site three days a week.

Another proposal, to build on protected greenbelt land near the Small Craft Harbor was received with howls of opposition from Live Oak residents.

Three Santa Cruz car dealers did relocate to Capitola in 1985, after their auto plaza design was exhaustively reviewed by city commissions.

Scotts Valley residents have not opposed the auto center project, mainly due to the city's assurance that the project will be discreet, well-designed and beautiful. Any changes in the city's design standards will have to be approved by the City Council, according to Caires.

"We'll keep talking as long as they're willing to negotiate in good faith," he said.