

Planning gone astray? Village views future without

By BILL AKERS

The revelation by a county official that the Aptos Village urban design plan in its present form is a dead duck, served one purpose — it reinforced the opinion held by some that incorporation is the only way out of the village's traffic problem.

It was Myron Jacobs, coordinator of the county's regional traffic plan, told members of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce and village residents that the village plan was dead. This was the first official word from the county that the village plan, which was to have been adopted by the county planning commission last May, had been sidetracked.

The reason it was sidetracked, Jacobs said, was that it didn't offer solutions to the traffic problems in Aptos Village. The bewildering part of that was that the citizens advisory committee which drew up the plan — at a cost of \$12,000 — was instructed by the county planning department not to concern itself with traffic matters.

"We have a plan that is useless," says Lucile Aldrich in an interview this week. "Why did we spend that \$12,000." In the interview, Mrs. Aldrich, who was on the advisory committee which drew up the plan, touched upon several aspects of the county's handling of village matters which has left her, and others, with ruffled feelings.

She also declared that only through incorporation of the Aptos area — from Porter Gulch

to La Selva Beach — can they attack its problems effectively.

An immediate problem, she feels, is the new post office, now under construction at Cathedral Drive and Trout Gulch Road, and due to open around July 1. She calls it "an imminent crisis."

"That's going to be something, isn't it?" she declares. "No provision has been made (by the county) for it. The county has known for more than a year and a half that the post office was going to be there, and nothing's been done. You ask what happened, and you get no answers."

It is her contention that, upon learning where the post office was to be located, the county should have begun immediately to plan the improvement of roads around the post office and in the village to handle the added traffic.

It would have taken two years to get the job done, she said, "but if they'd started a year and a half ago, now we'd only have six months to wait."

One aspect of Jacobs' presentation last week which angered her was the map he presented showing the county's regional traffic plan. It was four years old, she declares, and still showed the old Aptos Village by-pass which has long since become a community park.

"Where is the updated transportation plan?" she asked. "It is supposed to be updated every year. Why wasn't it brought to us?"

The regional plan calls for making Soquel Drive a four-lane

artery through the village. "The only way you can do that is to knock down all the buildings and move the railroad tracks..."

Mrs. Aldrich said architect James Ellmore had drawn up a good plan for the village. Ellmore served on the Aptos area general plan committee a couple of years ago, but was not a part of the Aptos village urban design study group.

Ellmore's plan, Mrs. Aldrich said, called for extending Polo Drive to Valencia Road "and take the Cathedral (Drive) people out over the Hopkins right of way." (Hopkins right of way is another name for the road leading into Nisene Marks State Park.)

As for Soquel Drive, it would be dead-ended on each side of the village. "There would be no through traffic in the village," according to Ellmore's plan, Mrs. Aldrich said.

When the urban design study group began its work — which took nine months to complete — Mrs. Aldrich said she argued "that since we're a nation on wheels, let's find out how to get at what we're going to put in the village." In other words, attack the traffic problem first.

But the committee was told to confine itself to the design of the village and leave the traffic problems to others. The orders to do this came from "on high," Jacobs said, later conceding that this meant former Supervisor Dale Dawson.

"Dawson didn't want Polo Drive to go through because he

was afraid it would bring in more people," Mrs. Aldrich stated.

Now, she says, "We have a plan that is useless" and the village faces an "imminent crisis" at the post office.

In addition, building is on the increase in the village area because of the use of septic tanks, "and we have no way to get the people in and out."

As long ago as February, 1975, the county had four plans for by-passes of Aptos Village, yet none are included in the regional traffic plan, Mrs. Aldrich says.

The improvement of Granite Road — a private road in which she owns part of the right of way — could have been improved to help with the post office traffic, she says, but as a long range solution, it would be of no value. There would still be a bottleneck at the Soquel Drive end because of the two lane bridge and underpass. And besides, there's no money in the county's coffers for the improvement of Granite Road.

As a long-time village resident and as a real estate agent, Mrs. Aldrich has little liking for the efforts to prevent any growth.

"In 1960, the general plan predicted an Aptos population of 11,500 by 1985. In 1975 we had 17,000," she points out. And preventing the making Highway 17 into a freeway to keep people out didn't work. "The people came anyway."

There needn't have been a sewer ban declared when it was found the Aptos sewer plant was inadequate for the job, she says.

"All we had to do was build an overflow tank, and that would have taken care of the problem." And the sewer ban is an "artificial" one, she believes, because people can now build homes with septic tanks until the Aptos sewer line is completed.

And then citing the county's proposed lot merger ordinance as the latest repressive move, she asks, "Will all of that keep people out of here? No. They'll come by hook or by crook. They'll build without permits, without septic tanks... you can't keep people out."

Practically within view of her own Aptos village home is a family living in a tent, getting its electrical supply from a generator, Mrs. Aldrich says. "They try to keep them out instead of sensibly providing for them..."

She says the county has been "totally irresponsible" for

allowing development on upper Cathedral drive. "It is covered with homes," she says. "They're building like mad, they're subdividing."

Cathedral Drive, she and people who live along it contend, is inadequate to handle the traffic it now carries and they want the county to do something about it.

"They're allowing people to build where they shouldn't, and where we do have urban services, you can only build on a septic tank."

It would take \$1 million worth of road construction to solve the traffic tangle, Mrs. Aldrich says, adding that nothing would probably be done until "more people are hurt, more people are killed, there are more accidents, more ruffled tempers..."

One slight remedy would be to put a post office substation in the new Deer Park shopping center "to keep that business over there."

But, to her, the only real solution is incorporation. She says that a 1967 study shows it was feasible then, and it is even more so now. There are 17,000 people living in the area included in the Aptos post office and fire department service areas, and with state subventions and other fees which would accrue to the new city, they could handle their own road problems. "If Capitola can do it, we can do it," she declared, adding, "We have some pretty powerful people working with us on this."

There are also some other incorporation forces at work, she concedes, but they want to incorporate so they can keep the village and the area the way it is.

Keeping the village a "rustic, open little village" is not her idea of how things should be done. The Aptos village urban plan, she feels, is a moderate approach, providing for a small shopping

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area without a supermarket, and with high-density housing nearby for low income and seniors "so they can walk and do their shopping."

"We have a 10,000-acre Nisene Marks park, an eight-acre village park, the Pacific Ocean, DelaVeaga Park, Pinto Lake... we don't need to keep Aptos village as another park. People should be allowed to live here..."

The only way to get all that accomplished as far as she's concerned is incorporation.

"That's our only quick answer — and that is not going to be quick."