

the first to be conceived by the technique of Robert Edwards. (AP Laserphoto)

Among more than a dozen tax ure, specifically endorsed the inflation, so that most workers

# SC Auto Plaza Appears Dead

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The Santa Cruz Redevelopment Commission voted Wednesday night to recommend that plans for a River Street auto plaza be abandoned because the area doesn't meet the legal definitions of a blighted area.

The recommendation now goes to the City Council, which, as the Redevelopment Agency, has final say on the project.

The proposal calls for joint city-auto dealer financing to purchase the approximate 30 acres of land, which now accommodate 29 businesses, and convert the area into an auto plaza for six dealerships. Gross cost has been estimated at \$6.7 million.

Finding blight is a legal requirement for the city to redevelop the River Street-Highway 1 section.

Chairman Alan Levin told fellow members they were required to find that the majority of the area is unfit or unsafe for occupation and is conducive to ill health.

"I personally don't find those elements. Even if we did, that's not enough," Levin said.

"We must show that the situation can't be improved by

private industry and it is being improved," he explained.

"Personally I feel that an auto plaza in that area would be a good project and would improve the city, but just because I feel that way doesn't mean it's legally feasible and we're bound by redevelopment law."

Commission members Eric Schaefer, who urged a decision be reached at the meeting, and Robert Bell, who called for the vote on the issue, concurred.

"It's important to the auto dealers and to the public in general to get this project going or stop it," Schaefer said. A decision on blight, he added, would be helpful in discussion of future projects.

"If we can't find blight, the Redevelopment Agency might as well forget any projects in the North Pacific area," he said.

Schaefer addressed an issue of concern to all city officials — that some of the auto dealers might leave town if they can't find suitable room for expansion. "If one dealer leaves, the city could lose more (sales tax revenue) than this whole project area produces," Schaefer said. But, he added, he couldn't find the area to be blighted.

Bruce Van Allen said there are "a couple of blighted

parcels," but in general "it's a booming area."

Saying he "read four votes," Bell moved for the recommendation, which won unanimous support from the seven-member commission.

Even Evelyn Morris, who wanted more time to make up her mind, and Gerrie Haden, who said she felt sales tax statistics showed the area "isn't pulling its weight" compared to what the auto dealers could provide, concurred on the issue of blight.

A side benefit of the project, Haden said, "would be widening and straightening of River Street," which she said should be recommended to the city regardless of the commission's decision on the auto plaza. The commission will study that subject next month.

"I think you came to the logical conclusion," said John Santee, who led a large delegation of River Street property owners carrying "No On Auto Row" placards to the meeting.

"I'm glad you toured the area and saw the hard work being done there by residents and businesses." He said property owners "are not opposed" to the street improvements and beautification Haden had suggested.