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Hearing set for Cedros Crossing project

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SOLANA BEACH – Residents concerned about a proposed mixed-use development at the railroad tracks will have another crack at voicing their support or opposition tomorrow.

The City Council will hold the first in a series of public hearings about Cedros Crossing, a \$50 million mixed-use project that could change the complexion of downtown.

Cedros Crossing public hearing

When: Tomorrow, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: City Council Chambers, 635 S. Highway 101

Next hearing: March 24., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., also at City Council chambers.

Cedros Crossing, proposed by developer Greg Shannon, would be east of Coast Highway 101 and bounded by Lomas Santa Fe Drive, North Cedros Avenue and Cliff Street.

The public hearing will provide a forum for residents to comment on the final environmental review to help the City Council decide whether to accept that study.

The council must approve the environmental impact review before it can hold another series of public hearings to decide whether to approve the proposed development.

Saturday's hearing will begin with a presentation by the city's consultants, Mayor Lesa Heebner said. Then the council will hear public testimony. At the end of the hearing, the consultants will answer community questions. The hearing is scheduled to last all day, in anticipation of a crowd.

Shannon will be able to make comments just like other residents, but he will not be allowed to present his project or answer questions from the audience. He will be given that opportunity when the city holds public hearings on the project itself, Heebner said.

Shannon's development includes:

- About 21,100 square feet of shops and restaurants.
- Roughly 11,100 square feet of office space.
- About 140 rental lofts with underground parking, a clubhouse and a pool.
- A 528-space train station garage.
- A new home for the North Coast Repertory Theatre, with a 350-seat main theater and 150-seat auxiliary theater.

Construction of the project also is expected to produce 90,000 cubic yards of sand that could be used to replenish the eroded Fletcher Cove.

The proposed development and environmental report triggered unprecedented response from residents, many of whom wrote the city to express their objections.

Their concerns focused on:

- Insufficient parking because commuters and theater-goers will be sharing the train station garage. Residents who live near the proposed development worry about spillover parking on their streets.
- Worsened traffic congestion on Coast Highway 101 and Lomas Santa Fe Drive.

Sean MacLeod, a member of the executive committee of the South Cedros Property Owners Association, said he likes the idea of building a centerpiece downtown and providing housing next to a transit center.

“I just wish it weren't quite as large,” he said. “If it's a little smaller, it would be a lot more suitable for Solana Beach.”

Resident Ron Gordines, who lives on Seabright Lane near the train station, wrote in an e-mail to the city that the traffic generated by Cedros Crossing would have a very negative impact on neighborhood streets.

But there are supporters, too, and they are expected to speak up tomorrow.

Libba Jackson-D'Ambrosi, who chairs the education committee of North Coast Repertory Theatre, urged the city to allow Cedros Crossing to proceed because the theater has outgrown its space at Lomas Santa Fe Plaza and needs a new home.

“We have been a Solana Beach cultural resident for 25 years. We would not be part of the project if we thought it was going to hurt our hometown,” she said in a telephone interview.

Jackson-D'Ambrosi also said there would be sufficient parking at the proposed train station garage.

“Theater-goers (will use) the garage at different times from commuters,” she said.

Another supporter, Keith Nordling, a local resident, called the project wonderful.

“It's in a highly commercialized sector that's lacking restaurants, a market and cultural things,” he said. “That's exactly what designers of this Cedros Crossing are proposing. I can go shop, have something to eat and never leave the city.”

Another resident, Michael Sayre, wrote in an e-mail that the benefits of the development, such as tax revenue, far outweigh its potential negative effects.

“I believe I am among the silent majority of Solana Beach residents who believe Cedros Crossing will make Solana Beach a better place,” Sayre wrote.

Shannon said there were solutions to the traffic problem. They include adding a second left-turn lane on southbound Highway 101 to eastbound Lomas Santa Fe Drive. He also said Caltrans would be improving the Interstate 5 interchange at Lomas Santa Fe to ease traffic congestion.

Shannon estimates that if all goes well, the parking garage could break ground as early as December and the project could be completed by March 2011.