

## **Rep counting on Cedros Crossing for show to go on**

March 15, 2007

By Dr. Allen Moffson

Solana Beach is in danger of losing a smart growth project, and North Coast Repertory Theatre along with it.

The Cedros Crossing train station redevelopment project dates to a 1989 decision for a new Amtrak/Coaster station, replacing one in Del Mar. In 1991, the Solana Beach City Council decided a mixed residential/commercial project would enhance a parking garage that North County Transit District would need to serve its riders.

It's time for the City Council to move ahead, certify the final environmental impact report, and then approve the project without further delay, which hurts the city and could kill North Coast Rep.

I have lived in Solana Beach for 30 years and have my periodontal practice here. I became a board member of North Coast Rep over concerns this cultural asset might leave Solana Beach. But inclusion of the theater in Cedros Crossing is not the only reason I support this project. The Cedros Crossing plan includes shops, restaurants, small offices and apartments plus the parking to support them and train riders. The project would benefit the city economically, culturally and even physically, since it encourages walking and biking. It would improve traffic flow and replenish sand on the beach.

Three years ago the City Council asked the developer to put North Coast Rep into the project. North Coast Rep's lease was expiring, and we were considering an offer from the city of Encinitas for a land lease at \$1 a year, with unrestricted parking. We wanted to stay in Solana Beach, however, so we accepted this project's offer for a yearly \$1 lease. Since then we have invested considerable money in design and architectural work, and have given up building height.

Our new building would have a 349-seat theater, a 150-seat flexible space, and two classrooms for our prestigious Theatre School. Our lease is tied to progress on this project, and we have no viable alternatives even outside Solana Beach.

Cities evolve. South Cedros has become an important magnet for commerce and connection, through its design, music and art. Extending that energy north of Lomas Santa Fe Drive would enrich Solana Beach. The cultural and economic benefits outweigh objections, many of which are minor or ill-informed.

The fear that building the train station project would add to the city's traffic woes is exactly backward. When the rail trench was built to separate the tracks from the street, traffic flow was greatly improved at the linked intersections of Lomas Santa Fe at both Highway 101 and Cedros. Now that intersection is clogged in the morning by commuters traveling south on 101 who want to turn left onto Lomas Santa Fe. The city's traffic study shows that re-striping to create two left lanes would bring the delays down to lower than current levels.

The city calculates that 37 percent of this rush-hour burden (and therefore the percentage of mitigation costs) would be cars bound for the train station. That means 63 percent of this rush-hour surge is not associated with the Cedros Crossing project.

The study also shows that traffic growth will cause the same delays in a few years without Cedros Crossing. By helping to fund the traffic mitigation, this project would improve traffic flow through the center of town.

Parking fears are exaggerated. The city's EIR, in the Reduced Massing Alternative plan (the one actually being considered), declares parking adequate. The project includes 966 parking spaces, including 525 underground, compared with 319 spaces in the current lot. Theater-goers park during off-peak periods, and could use additional nearby parking if needed.

Now that the planning and approval process for even a modest project lasts longer than the term of an elected official, residents should encourage their leaders to follow through, despite inevitable eleventh-hour objections. Twenty community workshops have been held on the project over the past decade, and the project has been downsized based on community input. The buildings are no higher than two stories, between 27 and 32 feet high.

Failure to approve the project puts the city budget at risk. Specifically, a report prepared by the city's financial staff for a May 2006 priority-setting workshop shows the city of Solana Beach at risk fiscally by 2009-10 without a property tax revenue boost from Cedros Crossing. The project would generate an estimated \$375,000 annually in additional property tax, retail sales tax and fees.

Cedros Crossing will replace a surface parking lot; and is a smarter project than the original project, which included a 500 foot long, 35 foot high above-ground parking garage. No project at all is an unlikely alternative. North County Transit District's need for more rider parking will remain, meaning if Cedros Crossing is not approved, NCTD could proceed with an above-ground garage which may not require City or State approval.

Towns all over California are embracing the benefits of transit-centered mixed-use infill. Cedros Crossing will enhance the charm of Solana Beach by creating land uses that support each other and insure the City's financial Health. Without Cedros Crossing, North Coast Rep, the only year-round professional theater in the county outside of the City of San Diego, may not thrive or survive.

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■ Moffson is president of the North Coast Repertory Theatre Board of Trustees. Details on a new North Coast Rep are at [www.northcoastrep.org](http://www.northcoastrep.org).