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## Mountain View City Council approves San Antonio Shopping Center facelift

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Mountain View's shabby San Antonio Shopping Center is going under the knife.

The city council voted 6-0 Tuesday night in favor of a project that will radically change the face of the plaza on El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. A Safeway grocery store, 350-unit apartment complex, three major retail stores and a group of shops and restaurants will take the place of a Sears department store, among other buildings.

"Overall, I think it's great for the city," Vice Mayor Mike Kasperzak said in an interview Wednesday. "It is a gateway site to the city. It's been a sorry piece of property for as long as I've lived here, which is over 30 years."

Before winning the council's blessing Tuesday, developer Merlone Geier agreed to some last-minute changes that will sweeten the deal for the city. The developer will pay an estimated \$5.5 million in park fees and make 10 of the apartment units below market rate.

Council members delayed a decision on the project about a month and a half ago because of concerns about pedestrian and bicycle access.

"My main concerns were with the internal circulation patterns and the question about whether this was going to be really pedestrian- and bike-friendly enough," Council Member Ronit Bryant told The Daily News on Wednesday.

Merlone Geier agreed at the meeting Tuesday to work with Mountain View's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee on ways to improve the layout for bikers and walkers, and to

build a bicycle lane on San Antonio Road running the length of the development.

Bryant said she was also satisfied with other changes the developer made since it last appeared before the council. They included pushing some of the proposed retail buildings closer to the sidewalk on El Camino Real. The tweak will make the area more attractive to passers-by, she said.

Several of the dozen-plus residents who attended the meeting, however, urged the council to hold off for a more bike-friendly plan.

"This is just poorly planned for bicyclists," Wendee Crofoot said. "I can't figure out how you would get from Fayette Drive to Safeway without the car 2 feet behind you honking his horn because you're in his lane."

Kasperzak said he is hopeful the redevelopment project will inspire owners of other rundown parcels at the shopping center to make improvements.

"If it's done as well as we expect it to be done, it will also spur improvement in the rest of the shopping center," he said.

Demolition is scheduled to begin at the end of July with construction starting in October, said Merlone Geier Vice President Mike Grehl. The latter phase is expected to last two years, he said.

"We're very happy with the council's decision and very excited to get this project going," Grehl said.



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Council Member John Inks did not vote on the project because he lives near the shopping center.

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