

Santa Fe Pacific renews its Fremont housing plan

By Ken Leiser
Staff writer

FREMONT — With the fate of a 100-acre auto mall in limbo, Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corp. is trying to resurrect its controversial plan to build houses on industrial land west of the Nimitz Freeway.

William Jones, project director for Santa Fe's Fremont Shores proposal, said his company resubmitted a general plan amendment Wednesday identical to the one struck down by a 3-2 vote of the City Council on Feb. 25.

While the council vetoed the housing

element of Santa Fe's plan, it began studying whether the land and road network could accommodate one of the largest auto malls in the state.

The rest of the land would remain in industrial zoning, under the city plan.

"We have made a commitment to pursuing the auto mall," Jones said. "But if their studies show that their proposed plan has insurmountable problems, we would like to be on record with this back-up proposal."

Santa Fe's plan to build 3,000 houses on industrial land west of Interstate 880 was quashed, despite the developer's

predictions that the city's supply of residential land would dwindle away within two years.

City planners warned that Santa Fe's housing plan would create an island community "in a sea of industrial and commercial uses" that could "easily become a marginal living area."

Still, Councilmen Gary Mello and Bill Ball — the lone proponents of Santa Fe's plan — argued that the city would benefit from the proposal because it would build a fire station, a school, and affordable housing.

"The City Council expressed their

wishes," Jones said.

"If we are wrong, we will pursue their plan insofar as the auto mall," he said.

In an effort to help the auto mall along, Fremont has spent \$50,000 to study traffic, financial and redevelopment issues, and has created a 20-member task force of city staff members.

James McKeenan, an attorney representing nine Fremont auto dealers, warned members of the Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday that the lucrative auto mall will be built somewhere else in Fremont, Newark, or Milpitas if Santa Fe does not allow it to be built.

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