

February 14, 2008

Nut Tree to boost visibility

Renovation plan would create a food court and a candy court in a bid to increase foot traffic and business.

By Jennifer Gentile/Staff Writer

Developers on Tuesday unveiled a \$1.5 million renovation plan for part of Vacaville's Nut Tree Complex.

It would attempt to give businesses greater visibility, separate the market pavilion into two distinct areas and cut the number of bocce courts in half.

The renovation would affect the Nut Tree Market Pavilion and the Bocce Grove - components of the overall 80-acre entertainment and shopping complex that is situated along Monte Vista Avenue. Master developer Snell and Co. has teamed with Westrust on the Nut Tree project.



"I think everybody understands the intention of this renovation," said Sean Whiskeman, managing director of leasing and marketing for Westrust, "which is to increase foot traffic, increase visibility." The goal would be for business to increase for the tenants.

The Market Pavilion comprises about 10,000 feet of the overall Nut Tree Village and is home to tenants like Fenton's Creamery, Made in California, Jelly Belly candies, Villa Corona Mexican restaurant, Winters Fruit Tree and others. Three businesses have moved out of the pavilion in recent months, citing a lack of activity and landlord-tenant issues in some cases.

"The Market Pavilion renovation plan calls for minor facade modifications that will allow tenants to have direct exterior storefronts along with highly visible entrances and outdoor seating areas," according to a prepared statement from Westrust. In the same statement, Whiskeman said, "The spirit of the renovation is to open up this portion of the project and make it more accessible to visitors while stimulating foot traffic for our tenants."

The renovation also would create two distinct eatery sections - a food court and a candy court. The food court would include Villa Corona and other restaurants, while Jelly Belly, Fenton's and Vintage Sweet Shop would be a part of the candy court.

"It's actually the same tenants that are there right now," said Danielle Tocco of Amies Communications, "with a few new additions that will be named in the future."

Although he did not say specifically what the renovation would mean for businesses in the pavilion, Whiskeman said, "We will be working very closely with the tenants during this time and during this transition. We're working through those details at this point."

The renovation of the bocce grove would bring in an outdoor fire pit for public gatherings, as well as 12 benches, and establish a central plaza with a stage for community activities. Four of the eight bocce courts would be retained, and two playground areas with "interactive, animal-shaped climbing toys" would be created.

Vice Mayor Chuck Dimmick said he liked the idea of a larger area for gathering. As for the bocce ball courts, he said, "(They) haven't been getting much use. Eight courts was a lot."

Councilman Curtis Hunt said the concept "seems a little more organized, a little less disjointed." Like Dimmick, he pointed out that it provides "a larger area for community events."

Both councilmen also mentioned an idea to involve the city's Community Service Department in running bocce activities, which would hopefully increase the use of the remaining courts.

At least one tenant, John Jamison with Jelly Belly, was enthusiastic about the proposal.

"I'm very excited and upbeat over it," he said. "I think the visibility is tremendous for all of the tenants that will be there. It will be more open and easily accessible."

The proposal must go through the permitting process at the city level before it is implemented, Whiskeman said, adding, "Westrust will work closely with City Council and city staff on planning details and all necessary permits during the planning process."

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