

## Local Golf

T.R. REINMAN

## Two new centers display range of driving ranges



When is a driving range not a driving range?

When it's submerged in the Mission Valley flood plain.

Ba-duh-boom.

No, these days driving ranges have become golf centers.

It's just not good enough any more to flatten 10 dusty acres, set out the yardage markers and rent scarred, squared golf balls.

With an increased emphasis on teaching, and practicing; with more people finding less time to devote to a 5½-hour round; with prices going up and spare change going down; with 150-acre parcels good for courses scarcer than ever; golf centers have taken on a new importance in the game.

According to a 1994 National Golf Foundation survey, more than 11 million Americans spent time at a stand-alone range in 1993. In general, they were younger than the general golf population, and more of them were female. The average stay was between 45 and 60 minutes.

Said National Golf Foundation vice president of operations Rick Norton, "Because it is less time intensive, the range experience is very appealing to those in the family-raising years."

Three local developers have figured that much out, even though by their own admission two of them barely knew the difference between a branding iron and a 7-iron when they began their projects.

The Palms Golf Center, developed by South Bay builder George Merzotis and insurance man Dan Dole, opened recently on 13½ acres that stretch between the Palm Avenue trolley stop and I-5.

Also in play, at last, is the Harborside Golf Center, which is bounded by the Santa Fe Railroad station, Broadway, Pacific Highway and Ash Street downtown. Developer Sandy Shapery, like Merzotis a non-golfer, and a group of 20 doctors put it together.

Both facilities rent large and small buckets of new Spaldings. Both have putting and chipping greens and a practice bunker. Both have a pro shop and a restaurant. Both offer memberships.

And they are about as different as they could be, both from each other and what we've come to know and outgrow, the old driving range.

For one thing, Harborside, though plagued by building delays both within and beyond the developers' control, went from idea to opening in about 18 months. If they had not found an abandoned but full fuel tank under the tee structure, and if they had planned to put a top on the netting in the first place, they might have opened three months earlier.

Still, there were smiles all around when the place opened for business last week.

"When you've got a couple million bucks in the thing you've got to keep a good attitude," Shapery said.

The head pro is Ken Cherry, for 23 years a member of the Southern California PGA Section, the last eight at Porter Valley in Northridge.

Three membership plans, pointed at downtown workers and residents, range in price and features.

Few places can have as many bells and whistles as Harborside. At designated stations, your ball is teed automatically. There is a

## NEW IN TOWN

## HARBORSIDE GOLF CENTER

ADDRESS 820 W. Ash St.

TELEPHONE 239-4653

STATIONS 80

LARGE BUCKET \$6

NIGHT LIGHTING Yes.

PREVAILING WIND Right to left.

MEMBERSHIPS Enrollment fees of between \$100 and \$169 plus monthly dues of between \$29 and \$69 for discounts on balls, reserved tee times, use of facilities.

## PALMS GOLF CENTER

ADDRESS 540 Hollister St.

TELEPHONE 424-3213.

STATIONS 42.

LARGE BUCKET \$5.

NIGHT LIGHTING To come.

PREVAILING WIND Into the wind.

MEMBERSHIPS \$99 initiation plus \$39 monthly for unlimited play on the range and course, reserved tee times, tournaments.

phone at every station, so you can order a drink or make a business call. There is an AiStar computer system for swing analysis outside and a Full Swing Video setup inside.

Coming soon, a hole-in-one jackpot that, at \$1 per ball, pays odds for aces made in any of the four greens, which are now guarded fairly well by the massive posts that support the bigtop.

# San Diego Daily Transcript

MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 1995

## Harborside Golf Is Open And Can Feel Your Pain

By TONY ALLISON

Special To The Daily Transcript

It's a Monday afternoon in downtown San Diego. You have an hour before your next meeting.

The memory of your disastrous Sunday golf game has been tormenting you all day. Hitting a quick bucket of balls might be just the right therapy.

The new Harborside Golf Center feels your pain and is there to help.

Looming high above Pacific Coast Highway at A Street like a circus tent on steroids, developer Sandy Shapery's \$2.5 million, state-of-the-art driving range and golf club is ready to cure your hook and slice your handicap.

By offering a well-equipped pro shop, lessons and clinics by director of golf Ken Cherry and his team, and an impressive array of services for the golf-addicted, Harborside Golf is aiming to carve itself a

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## Harborside Golf Opens—

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unique niche in the golf business.

The astro-turfed hitting area is about 300 yards long, and is double-decked on both north and south ends, providing space for 80 golfers at one time. During off-peak hours, 20 grass tees are available. The lower tee areas offer tee-up machines that for an extra fee automatically set the next ball at one of four different height settings.

Chicago and San Francisco have similar operations, but Harborside Golf has some unique aspects, such as the "Hole in One Game," created by Shapery. To play, golfers purchase special golf balls for \$1 each. They then shoot at four targets varying in distance from 90 to 175 yards away.

If the shot lands within a five-foot radius, it will funnel into the hole. Based on distance, each hole carries different odds. Golfers who land a special ball in the right hole win cash based on the odds for that hole.

The odds will be set by the staff and outside pros. The preliminary odds on the 175-yard hole are between 30 and 50 to 1. There will be a progressive jackpot offered as well.

Low handicappers know the importance of the short game.

A 300-yard drive and a four-foot putt both count one stroke. To help hone the entire golf game, Harborside includes a practice sand trap and chipping area, as well as a large bent grass putting green.

Both north and south ends will have a point of sale operation and parking. Valet service will be available to shuttle people back and forth. Telephones are located at every other tee-box and can be used to request drinks or demo clubs, or to call home or the office.

"We want to be the Nordstrom's of golf, and we believe that we have the facility and staff to do it," said Steve Severin, assistant manager.

In every new project of this size, there are always snags and last-minute snafu's. Harborside Golf was no exception.

After a group of investors began launching golf balls with alarming frequency over the side netting and onto Pacific Highway, Shapery decided to, literally, put a lid on it.

But to suspend a net across the entire range, he needed some very tall poles, very quickly. Shapery determined that 145-foot power transmission poles would do the

job. Acquiring them was another matter.

"I found out that only two firms in the U.S. made them and each had a three- to four-month backlog of orders," said Shapery. He finally tracked down some surplus poles at Washington Power & Light.

"The only problem was that the trucks used to transport them were tied up delivering Christmas trees," he said.

Shapery finally got his poles in late December, at a 15 percent premium. But now not even a John Daly-esque blast can escape the center.

More than 250 people have signed up for memberships at Harborside. While members are offered certain benefits and club events, the center is open to everyone and management encourages the casual player to stop by and beat some balls.

On Saturdays, Harborside will offer free junior clinics, open to the public.

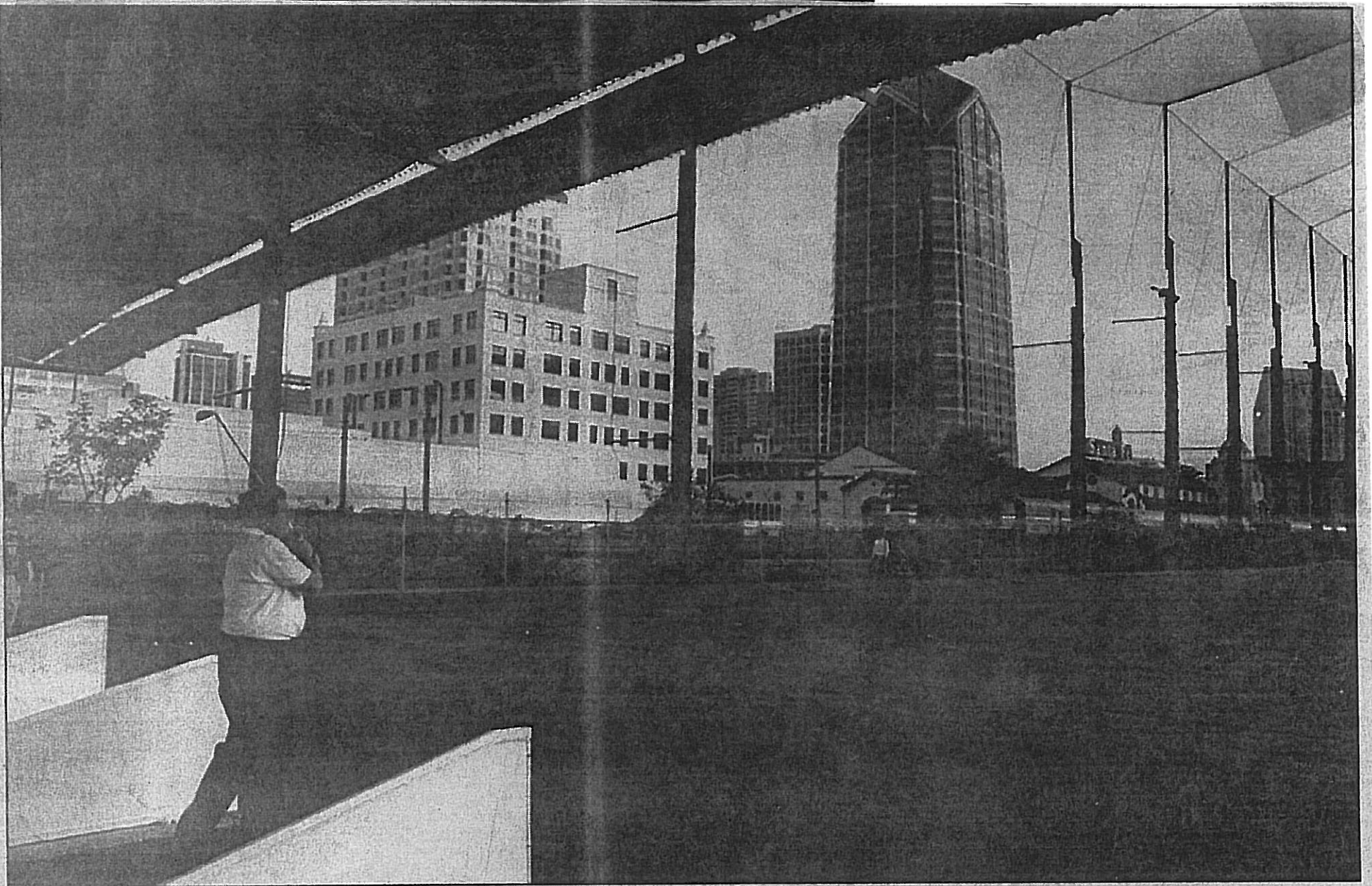
The Harborside Golf Center had a trial run this weekend and is officially open starting today. It will operate 7 days a week, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



CITY EDITION

# San Diego

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE • SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 1995



Union-Tribune / JOHN GASTALDO

**Downtown driver:** A golfer tries out the new downtown Harborside Golf driving range on Pacific Highway, to open Monday.

## Golfers can now walk to drive at downtown range

*Pacific Highway facility opens to public Monday*

By RONALD W. POWELL  
Staff Writer

**W**ith his wingtips, brown suit pants, crisp blue shirt and nattily knotted tie, Gus Pina looked a little out of place as he prepared to slap a golf ball with a sleek club.

Balance is the key to a solid golf swing, and, in that regard, Pina was picture perfect this week.

*Whack!* Time and time again he drove the white orb down the fairway of the driving range with grace and power.

*Whack! Whack! Whack!*

"I used to play every other day, but I haven't played in about a year because of

a bad back," said Pina, a purchasing manager for an import-export company, following a happy reunion with the golf game. "Here at the range, I had a great time."

That's what Sandy Shapery and the other investors in Harborside Golf Center want to hear.

The center, at 801 West Ash St., is a rarity — a state-of-the-art driving range near the heart of downtown. Located along Pacific Highway, just south of the County Administration Center, the San Diego range joins the Illinois Center in Chicago as big cities with an urban tee service, Shapery said.

## Street SCAPE

Membership holders can play today and through the weekend. On Monday, Harborside opens to the general public with the hope of attracting golfers among the urban core's tourists, government workers, residents and business people.

People like Pina. He was among a group of professionals from the towering One America Plaza Building who were invited over Thursday to christen the driving range. The glass-encased One Ameri-

ca is about as far away from the golf center as a par-5 hole — well within striking distance for Pina.

"I can walk over here and practice," Pina said. "Here, you can experiment and get away with it. On the golf course, oftentimes you are playing for money and you can't experiment."

Shapery, a major local developer, decided to take a gamble on the urban range last year. He took out a 10-year lease on the property from the adjacent Santa Fe Railroad and put up 90 percent of the \$2.5 million required to build the golf complex.

See Golfers on Page B-5



Saturday, January 21, 1995

## Golfers

Driving range opens in downtown S.D. Monday

Continued from B-1

If Shapery's numbers are right, Harborside could be as big as consecutive holes in one. His surveys tell him there are 670,000 people living and working within a five-mile radius of the driving range. He believes there are a lot of duffers in that crowd.

"And if they're not already golfers, we intend to *make* them golfers," said Shapery, a non-golfer who designed, developed and formerly owned the Emerald Shapery Center downtown.

To teach the fine points of the game, Harborside has eight members of the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) and four apprentices as instructors.

Don Cherry, a PGA member for 25 years, serves as director of golf. He said the driving range provides the opportunity to hit more balls in 35 minutes than during a four- or five-hour round of golf.

Bullish on the game, Cherry said golf is one of the few sports that allows people of widely varying abilities to play together. It is also highly addictive.

"You're always trying to beat your last score, whether you're a new player trying to break 100 or a good player who shoots par," Cherry said.

To promote the game among youth, Cherry said, the driving range will hold free instruction clinics for junior golfers on Saturday afternoons.

To teach the fine points of the game, Harborside has eight members of the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) and four apprentices as instructors.

Harborside was built for convenience.

There are 80 tee boxes, 40 each at the north and south ends of the 285-yard expanse. Golfers can tee off from ground-level boxes or from tee areas directly overhead. A motorized cart will transport a golfer from one end of the range to the other.

The boxes are equipped with telephones, speaker phones and automatic tee machines. A restaurant and bar will soon open that will serve food and beverages to the boxes.

The clubhouse contains a golf shop and putting green. There is also a simulated golf booth in which duffers hit the ball from a tee and receive calculations on the height and distance of the shot.

To add an additional inducement to pound a few balls across the range's artificial grass, golfers can golf for dollars. Players must purchase specially identified balls and are rewarded if they hit holes in one at target greens on the fairway.

Barry Coome, director of security at One Horton Plaza, said he expects to visit the driving range a couple of times each week. A golfer for 30 years, Coome said the center's location will make it easy to drop by at lunch time.

Susan Menne, office manager at Nicholas Applegate money management firm, hit her tee shots with authority, then talked about her addiction to the game. Her father was a golfer, said Menne, so she is no stranger to wearing golf spikes or to the frustrations of trying to guide a little ball with a big club.

"It's a personal challenge," Menne said. "You can go to the same course and never play the same way as the last time. There are good days and bad days."

Menne said she will probably drop in at the driving range a few times each month to brush up on her technique. Would she trade lunch hour in a nice restaurant for a few swings at the range?

"Not every day," she said with a smile. "Sometimes. But not every day."

# San Diego Daily Transcript

ESTABLISHED 1886

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1994

Sandy Shapery brings computers, lasers and \$1.5 million to a downtown driving range. Sports Business is on Page 5A.  
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## Shapery Seeks Golf Bonanza From His Broadway South 40

By TIMOTHY McCLAIN

San Diego Daily Transcript Sports Editor

If Sandy Shapery has his way, conventioners and business travelers in San Diego will become quite fond of his "south 40."

No, the flamboyant real estate developer hasn't fled inland for a dude ranch in Ramona.

Rather, Shapery has put his money behind a \$1.5 million downtown driving range now under construction at the corner of Broadway and Pacific Highway, just across the railroad tracks from the Santa Fe Depot.

And since few things Shapery does are ordinary, it is no surprise the 80-tee golf range fits quite comfortably in his portfolio.

Examples? Well, his Harborside Golf Center will be equipped with lasers to form nighttime targets. Players who buy the proper bucket of balls and land one in the right spot win a prize. Plain old targets will be used for similar contests during daylight hours.

Those who like a beverage while working on their swing can have one delivered to the box. Same goes for food.

Need to dictate a letter to an assistant back at the office? No problem. There's a speaker phone for every two tees. Shapery expects to bill about 45 cents a minute, roughly what a cellular phone call costs.

As anyone who has hit a bucket of 50 balls or more knows, it can get dreary bending over repeatedly to place a new dimpled sphere on the tee.

"As an old man — I just celebrated my 50th birthday — it is not so easy to bend over and pick up the balls anymore," Shapery said.

To do away with such drudgery, 20 of the tee boxes will come equipped with automatic tee machines from Japan. Just dump in the bucket and whack away. If it proves popular, more of the devices will be added.

Set to open in mid-September, Harborside Golf also will feature a full line of golf clothing. Shapery said he is talking with purveyors like Ashworth, for those who want top quality, and midrange outfitters for the tourists.

For those who want to grab a bite and take a sip, the range will have a full-service golf restaurant. Sports memorabilia will be sold on a consignment basis.

Finally, a full range of teaching programs will be offered, including reasonably priced classes for beginners — women are being targeted — and high-tech efforts that involve computers.

Many quality golf instruction programs already feature simulators where a player hits a golf ball against a movie screen and the computer judges where it would have landed. Entire courses can be played without leaving a room.

Shapery says he's gone that one

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## Shapery's Driving Range—

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better.

Through a \$50,000 investment in software, Harborside customers can hit the ball off the tee onto the driving range and the Full Swing Golf virtual reality system will track the ball's flight and display where it would have landed on one of 12 famous golf courses. From that spot the player takes his next shot.

The range also will take short-notice reservations from select members. Parking should be plentiful. Ace Parking operates a 140-space and a 50-space lot adjacent to the project.

The idea, Shapery said, is to offer anything a person could want from a driving range.

"We intend to be the Nordstrom of the golf centers from the standpoint of just being totally service oriented," he said.

While Shapery is never at a lack for ideas, the downtown driving range proposal was made to him a year ago this week by Mike Dyer of John Burnham Co. while the two attended opening day at the Del Mar Races. Dyer was representing Golf Centers of America, which wanted to operate a downtown range but needed a financial backer.

Shapery said he "immediately" knew the idea would work and a partnership was born. Others have since bought into the project.

"It turns out that a friend of mine had a group of doctors that wanted to invest, so I sold off 30 percent of my interest," Shapery said. "I thought it would be good public relations. They love golf and it spreads the risk a little bit."

While Harborside Golf is open to the public, Shapery is promoting a two-tiered membership program.

The \$100 silver membership includes \$180 in tokens and discounts on an array of services.

The \$350 limited gold membership comes with \$420 in tokens. Gold members also can reserve times at the tee boxes and grass tees, use demonstration clubs for free and have access to private showers and lockers. A free computer video analysis comes with the package.

And why is it Shapery's "south 40?"

Harborside will be split in half with players hitting toward the middle. The section on Broadway will be used primarily for group events — Shapery will share the revenue with nonprofits that use the tees for fund-raisers — and for convention groups or visitors staying at downtown hotels.

The idea is concierges and others who look out for visitors will always be able to get their guests a tee. And since the tees are on the south end of the course and there are 40 of them ... Well, you get it.



# San Diego Daily Transcript

## Real Estate / Construction

L. 109, NO. 10

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 1994

2131 THIRD AVENUE

### Downtown Range Proposed

## Play A Round Of Golf On Your Lunch Break

By THOR KAMBANBIBERMAN  
*San Diego Daily Transcript Staff Writer*

A double-deck, 80-tee golf driving range is being proposed for property next door to the Santa Fe Depot in downtown San Diego at the foot of Broadway.

The proposed Harborside Golf Center on the Catellus property downtown is scheduled to be presented to the hearing officer of the Centre City Development Corp. on Wednesday.

David Allsbrook, will review the plan for the project with a double-deck driving range as its main feature. The development of Golf Centers of America, which has Sandor Shapery and actor Tom Selleck among its investors, is on a site bounded by Broadway, Pacific Highway, Ash Street and the California Street right-of-way where an Ace Parkin. As explained by Shapery, the project would have 80 tee boxes. Other amenities are expected to include a 7,950-square-foot clubhouse with a sports lounge, pro shop, men's and women's locker rooms, putting and chipping greens, 50 parking spaces in a landscaped lot next to the clubhouse, and a 75-space landscaped parking lot.

An 800-square-foot Tee Operations Center would include a rental and retail shop with outdoor vending machines and an outdoor patio. A landscaped parking lot with 71 spaces for both patrons and the general public would be located adjacent to the Tee Operations Center. Scott Bernet is the project architect.

A rooftop cafe also is being considered.

The perimeter of the site will be extensively landscaped. The driving range would be 865 feet long with two, two-level tee platforms at both ends of the range with golfers teeing from both directions. A single level of turf driving tees also would be provided at the south end of the range.

It is to be flanked with protective netting ranging from 40 feet at each end to a peak of 100 feet in the middle. The netting would be supported by poles placed 40 feet on center. Every third pole would be accented with banners or other decorative features.

Alder trees are planned to be planted outside the fence along Pacific Highway within a 7-foot-wide landscaped strip. The existing area between the curb and the sidewalk along Pacific Highway would be relandscaped with groundcover and palm trees. A 10-foot-wide sidewalk would adjoin a landscaped strip. A 12-foot sidewalk with a relandscaped setback

area would be built adjoining the parking lot along Broadway.

Under the terms of an existing agreement between Catellus and CCDC, Golf Centers of America could have up until December 2003 to use the site for a range.

Pending Allsbrook's approval, Shapery said construction on the projected \$1.35 million range could begin as early as next month, with completion in mid-August.

Golf Centers of America has a driving range in Fremont and is working on ranges in Ontario, Ca., and Las Vegas.

The proposed downtown driving range is just one of numerous such facilities around the county.

In Chula Vista, a 50-station driving range, putting green, chipping green and 70-space parking lot is being considered on port district property at the northeast corner of J Street and Marina Parkway.

On Otay Mesa, George Merziotis and Dan Dole are planning the Palm Golf Center. Located at 530 Hollister St., it would have a 41-tee driving range, nine holes of Par 3 golf, an 1,800-square-foot clubhouse and 60 parking spaces.

The Carroll Canyon Golf and Recreation Center along the south side of Carroll Canyon Road near Pacific Heights Boulevard, just south of Sorrento Mesa is to have a double-deck driving range with 80 tee boxes, a 7,000-square-foot clubhouse with a golf shop, training center, juice bar, health club and 2,000 to 3,000 square feet of retail, locker facilities and an exercise room. A 3,000-square-foot outdoor deck area also is planned for that project.

In addition, plans have been moving ahead for a 94-tee-box driving range to be built on a 13.56-acre site at Montgomery Field on Kearny Mesa.