

# Where is everybody?

Boulder Creek



Shoppers on foot are no obstacle to Alan Goldberg's housekeeping effort on this Boulder Creek sidewalk. Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

## Hard times dog Boulder Creek

By PAUL BEATTY  
Sentinel Staff Writer

BOULDER CREEK — The town's in trouble.

A dozen of its shops are closed, offered for rent, and there are no takers.

Business rents are high; shopkeepers say

owners charge \$800 to \$1,000 a month and offer no long-term leases. Rents are as high as those on congested 41st Avenue in Capitola, the merchants say.

Some of Boulder Creek's major commercial buildings are up for sale and going begging at less than assessed value.

Fewer tourists are coming to Boulder

Creek.

They don't want to face the drive up Highway 9 — the major road into town. They remember the long lines of cars that waited while state highway workers repaired winter storm damage and widened bridges the past few years.

Please see Page A4



# Hard times

Continued from Page A1

Last year, for more than four months, the road to Boulder Creek was cut to a single lane of shuttling cars after part of the storm-battered highway one mile south of town caved in.

This spring, the town is withering as though its aorta has been clogged too long.

Townpeople say there's nothing to do in their town — nothing for tourists or the homefolks.

There's no movie house, no real community center, no swimming pool since Forest Pool closed years back, no swimming hole in the San Lorenzo River that's any good and not enough events to bring the town together.

"There used to be a 'there' here but it's not here any longer," says 20-year resident Marilyn Painter who works at Triple Creek Press and directs local amateur theater.

She says Boulder Creek and Brookdale, a mile south, were once "the vacation capital" of Northern California.

Now, there's nothing to do in town. "Even if people from Santa Cruz were willing to come up here to eat dinner, there's nothing for them to do afterwards," she says.

Restaurants have a hard time making it; fast-food places come and go. Family Affair, in the Old Market Building, is closed for the winter; however, owner Bob Slawinski says he'll open for the summer when business is expected to be better. Esther Maries, a fine restaurant, has closed.

There are two pizza parlors, including a Round Table Pizza, among the other restaurants but the town doesn't have much variety in its take-out cuisine, say residents.

Alan Goldberg, one of the two barbers at the town's only barber shop, believes that because tax write-offs for expenses on rentals are gone, owners will lower the rents to get occupants in the vacant shops.

But Goldberg says the town isn't

what it used to be. "We used to see Winnebagos lined up along the street here. It doesn't happen anymore."

The barber shop does well, he said, falling in the category of necessary businesses, such as liquor stores, supermarkets and video rental shops.

Residents say there are too many loafers hanging around the streets; 16- to 20-years-olds, who drink on the street, use foul language and start fights. The town has no alternate activity to offer the young and the bored.

Nor are there cultural events and public outlets for local craftspeople.

There's not much "town identity" left, says Jim Gildmer, president of the Boulder Creek Business Association, who assumed the post recently.

"But," Gildmer adds, "the town has acknowledged these are hard times and from that knowledge, the Phoenix will rise. That's my gut feeling; it will fly again."

Five years back, Slawinski and other visionaries dreamed their town would recapture its past and draw crowds of tourists to experience a replicated logging town of the late 1800s.

A lot of work was done but the dream was never realized.

During the active years of the vision, the business association got the town new sidewalks — sidewalks that matched up all along the street — and got utility lines hidden underground. The "citification" project was completed in August 1983.

The association also had a portable public restroom in town and an agreement with a few restaurants to let the public use their facilities.

Cleanups were held. Trees and flowers were planted.

But then came the years of the highway problems and fewer people came. Business slowed and the interest in community betterment waned with each passing year.

Gildmer's "Phoenix" may have fluttered its wings Tuesday night.

He called a town "brainstorming session" to get ideas for the com-



This has become a sign of the times in Boulder Creek as businesses close their doors.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

munity to apply for Rural Renaissance Funds from the county.

Santa Cruz County has \$411,000 to distribute and applications may be made during the next four weeks. However, the county already has requests for \$933,650.

About 50 people came to the "brainstorming session," held at the Groundskeeper coffee house. Ideas weren't lacking.

"Turn the town into a Jackson Hole tourist attraction," was suggested, but countered with "First, we have to define what percentage of our community should be geared to tourists."

"Bring the tourists" but "give local residents a discount," was another.

Suggestions continued: Get rid of the loafers and their drinking, foul language and fights. Get a good community hall, fix and clean up the recreation hall, get a public toilet, crack down on the 25-mph speed limit, put in more crosswalks, better bus stops, a town square with benches "where we can sit and watch the town," more annual events, artists' outlets and town parks.

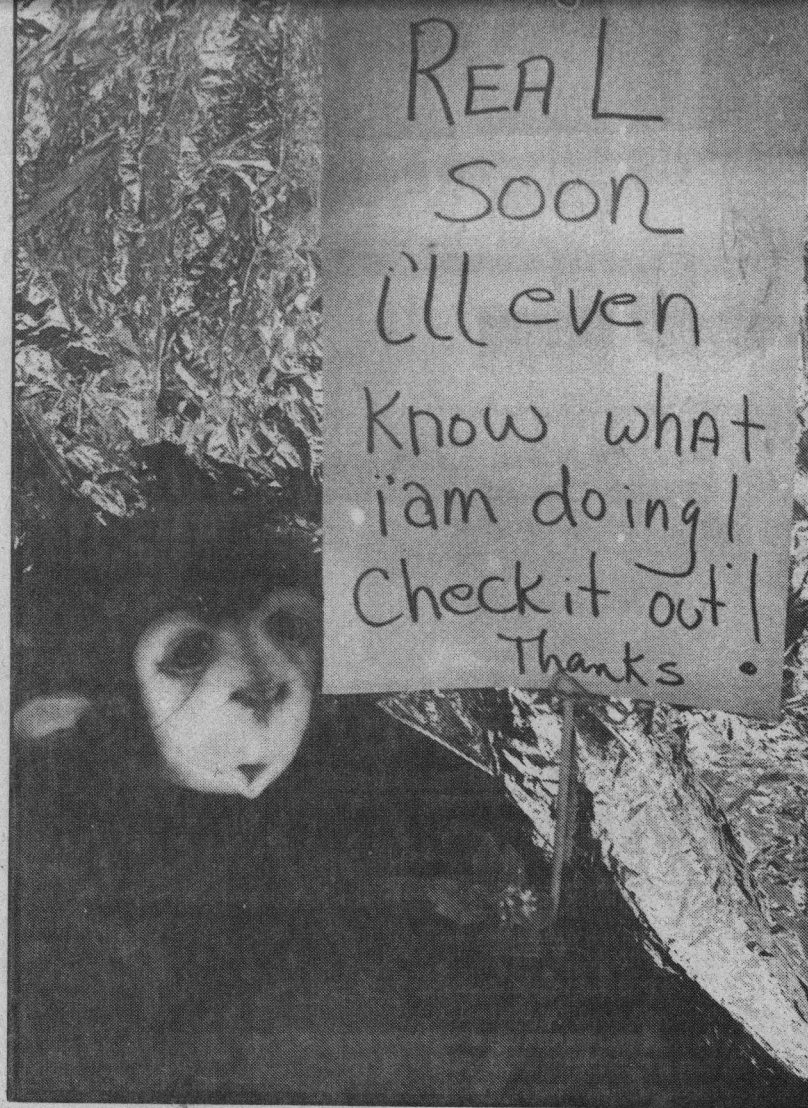


Boulder Creek will rise like a Phoenix, says business leader Jim Gildmer.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel







REAL  
Soon  
I'll even  
Know what  
I am doing!  
Check it out!  
Thanks •

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Sign on shop window reflects town's predicament.

bus stops, a town square with benches "where we can sit and watch the town," more annual events, artists' outlets and town parks.

One man suggested turning Highway 9 into a mall. Businesswoman Rachel Bachrach reminded the group that Highway 9 belongs to the state. "Let Caltrans say what we can do and then we'll fight them on it," Bachrach said.

The idea that held most of the group's attention was the reopening of Forest Pool—a large commercial swimming pool and community building north of town along Big Basin Highway.

It was suggested the town try to get grant funds and also to sell "stock" in the pool to residents.

A businessman who had been through town betterment before, said quietly, "Those are all good ideas. Now who's going to do all that work?"

## Boulder Creek will rise like a F

Groundskeeper owner Stephen Taylor said he believes the will is there.

"People are tired of staying indoors," he said. They want to get involved in the community. I believe we are on the way up. That's why we've got the big crowd tonight."

Gildmer said the town's economy has reached its bottom "and will swing upward."

A businessman who asked his name not be used, disagreed, somewhat.

He said, "Two or three more businesses will go under first, I'm afraid, before this begins to turn around."

Another, more optimistic, said, "Maybe it will be a dynamite year for tourists, every day will be sunshine and the town will get fat again."