

# Watsonville headed for one of biggest building years ever

By SUSAN FERRISS

The building boom in Watsonville is still going strong.

Residential and commercial building in Watsonville have increased dramatically the first part of this year, figures kept by city officials show. If the rapid pace of construction continues for the rest of 1984, the city will have one of the biggest years of building growth ever, Planning Director Robert Ellenwood said.

During the first seven months of this year, the city issued 314 building permits for construction of new buildings, alterations and additions. During the same period last year, it issued 220 such permits. The figures include work done on residential, commercial, industrial and public structures.

In the first seven months of this year, the city issued 71 building permits for single-family homes and 41 permits for duplexes. In the first seven months of 1983 the corresponding figures were 43 and 3, respectively.

In multi-family housing, the city issued permits for 20 buildings containing 164 units in the first seven months of this year. During the same period in 1983, the city issued five such per-

mits covering 20 new housing units.

Ellenwood attributed the surge in building this year to 1983's drop in interest rates. (The current boom really took off in the second half of last year.) He predicted that construction in Watsonville will level off soon because interest rates are climbing again.

The estimated value of the projects covered by this year's permits has also surged. The estimated total for the 314 projects is \$21,736,525. Last year the value for 220 projects was put at \$13,274,932.

Projects are under way in about 15 different zones of the city at this time. In one particularly busy area, in the vicinity of north Main Street, Green Valley Road and Pennsylvania Drive, a cluster of homes and commercial units is planned.

Off Main Street, three projects of 85, 32, and 16 residential units are being built. At Clifford Avenue and Pennsylvania Drive 80 garden apartments are going up. In the Apple Hill area at Main Street and Green Valley Road, builders are planning to put up 152 units.

Ellenwood said the city cannot be sure what the rents

will be for these units, since the prices are often adjusted before the units go on the market.

The county Housing Authority is building 70 units of low-income housing on five different sites on Pennsylvania Drive, Blackburn Street, Crestview Drive, and Clifford Avenue.

The county will base the rent for those homes on the income of the families that occupy them. Mary James, executive director of the Housing Authority, said the waiting list is already long.

In commercial building, developers just finished the Freedom Food Center on Freedom Boulevard and Green Valley Road. Ellenwood said the structure takes up about 30,000 square feet and is the first phase of a shopping center planned for that area.

Also off Green Valley Road, builders are planning the South County Professional Park, which will total about 80,000 square feet of office space.

Ellenwood said the city grants permits for subdivisions (tracts of housing sold as separate units) usually in about six to eight months. Permits for commercial buildings and apartment houses take about two to three months to get.