

CF Cabrillo College 1990 - RP

# Campus move plans delayed

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## Cabrillo's Watsonville site won't open until spring '94

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Plans to move Cabrillo College South County satellite campus into the old post office building in downtown Watsonville in the fall will have to wait until spring 1994.

Aug. 1 had been the target date for completing the needed renovations to the two-story, 11,000-square-foot building, with Cabrillo offering classes in the fall. But architect Robert Corbett said that "relatively extensive" structural work is needed to reinforce support columns on the first floor of the building. These renovations will take longer to complete than originally anticipated, he said.

Last month, Watsonville's Redevelopment Agency hired Robert Corbett AIA, a local architect firm, for \$30,000 to draw up plans to ready the building for lease to Cabrillo. The city of Watsonville, which owns the building, has been working closely for months with Cabrillo College officials to move the satellite campus into the building, located at the corner of Trafton and Union streets.

The work, Corbett said, involves digging into the building's foundation in order to install additional supports. This reinforcement needs to be completed before any other renovations or modifications can be started on the building, he said.

The building itself is sound, Corbett said.

"It's in fine shape. It's a wonderful building," Corbett said. "It survived the (1989) earthquake nicely."

Corbett said a structural analysis of the building was conducted, and revealed that the set of support columns in the middle of the first floor needed to be reinforced to meet current safety codes. The building, which was constructed in 1938, also needs to be upgraded to be handicap accessible. An elevator needs to be installed and all the bathrooms must be modified to meet handicap accessible requirements.

After this is completed, the floors need to be divided into classrooms and office areas. Cabrillo could then move furniture and all other equipment into the building, Corbett said.

Cabrillo's satellite campus - commonly known as the Watsonville Center - is currently housed in La Manzana shopping center, where it rents 4,500-square-feet that consists of three classrooms and a computer lab.

The center's lease, which is renewed annually, will expire in July. But Cabrillo's business office said this morning it is preparing to negotiate a lease that would run only until December. That's when the work on the old post office is expected to be completed. Cabrillo, according to its business office, leases the property for about

See CAMPUS / back of section ►

VC College RP p. 10

10 - Register-Pajaronian Tuesd

## CAMPUS

► From Page 1 MAR 9 1993  
\$4,000 a month. 1993

Rachel Mayo, director of the center, said the delay is not altogether unexpected but still somewhat of a letdown.

"I'm a little disappointed, but it will be a lot less stressful to complete the project," Mayo said. "It's better to be safe than be stuck."

Mayo has been working closely with Corbett and city officials on the project.

Moving the center into the post office building is the first step in opening a permanent South County satellite campus in downtown Watsonville. The center currently has about 900 students, but its facilities at La Manzana are too small, making expansion of student services and classes almost impossible, Mayo said. Cabrillo would lease about 10,200-square-feet of the post office building and estimates it could offer about 60 courses instead of the current limit of 40 at La Manzana, she said.

The state requires that community college satellite campuses have at least 500 full-time students - or about 2,000 part-time students - to qualify for new school construction funds. Cabrillo hopes to increase enrollment to meet those state requirements to qualify for the construction funds.

Watsonville has agreed to assist Cabrillo in finding a location in the downtown area to build the new satellite campus. The city could help provide some funding for the new site, but plans are in their formative stage and no details have been settled. Both Cabrillo and Watsonville city officials agree that a downtown satellite campus would be a boon to Watsonville's dragging downtown economy.

Preliminary cost of renovating the post office building run about \$430,000. Cost of modifications specific to the use of building by Cabrillo are estimated at about \$342,000, according to city figures. The city would receive \$367,220 in rent over a 36-month period by leasing 10,200-square-feet to Cabrillo at \$1 per square foot.